DOUBLOONS- AND THE GIRL

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Doubloons - and the Girl

DOUBLOONS—AND THE GIRL

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BY

JOHN MAXWELL FORBES

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DOUBLOONS—AND THE GIRL

CHAPTER I

ON THE BLIND SIDE OF CHANCE

Allen Drew, glancing carelessly about as he started for the shore-end of the pier, suddenly saw the girl coming in his direction. From that moment—dating from the shock of that first glimpse of her—the current of his life was changed.

Women were rare enough down here on the East River docks; one of the type of this gloriously beautiful girl seemed an impossibility—an hallucination. Curiosity was not even blended with his second glance at her. An emotion never before conceived in his heart and brain gripped him.

Somehow she fitted the day and fitted, too, his mood. The very spirit of April seemed incarnated in her, so springy her step, so lissom the swaying of her young body, so warm and pink the color in her cheeks. Her dress, of some light gray material, had a dash of color lent to it by the bunch of violets at her waist. Her figure was slender and slightly above the middle height. A distracting dimple dented the velvet of her right cheek, and above her small mouth and perfectly formed nose a pair of hazel eyes looked frankly out upon the world. Her oval face was surmounted by a dainty

toque, from under which a vagrant tendril of hair had escaped. This blew about her ears, glistening like gold in the sunshine.

Drew saw beautiful women every day of his life. He could not fail to do so in a city where they abound. But aside from the day and his mood, there was much about this slip of a girl that stirred him mightily and set his pulse to galloping.

He had lunched heartily, if not sumptuously, at one of the queer little restaurants that seem to have struck their roots into Fulton Market and endured for generations. There were no shaded candles on the table, and finger bowls would have evoked a puzzled stare or a frown from most patrons of the place. But the food was abundant and well cooked, and at twenty-two, with a keen appetite and the digestion of an ostrich, one asks for little more.

Drew paid his check and stepped out into the crooked side street that led to the East River, only a block distant. From force of habit, his steps turned in the direction of the chandlery shop where he was employed. On reaching South Street, he remembered a commission that had been given him to execute; so, turning to the right, he walked briskly toward the Battery.

It was a glorious day in early April. A sudden shower, vanishing almost as quickly as it had come, had washed the rough pavement of the old street to a semblance of cleanliness. In a very real sense

it had also washed the air until it shimmered with the translucence of a pearl. A soft wind blew up from the south and the streets were drenched with sunshine.

It was a day that might have prompted a hermit to leave his cave, a philosopher to renounce his books, a miser to give a penny to a beggar. It spoke of youth and love and growing things, of nest building in the trees, of water rippling over stones, of buds bursting into bloom, of grass blades pushing through the soil.

Yet, despite this—or perhaps because of it—Allen Drew was conscious of a vague restlessness. A feeling of discontent haunted him and robbed the day of beauty. Something was lacking, and he had a sense of incompleteness that was quite at variance with his usual complacent outlook on life.

He was not given to minute self-analysis, but as this feeling persisted and bothered him, he began harking back to the events of the morning in the hope of finding an explanation. Was there anything he had done that was wrong or anything that he had neglected to do that came in his province? He cudgeled his brains, but thought of nothing that should give him uneasiness.

He had corrected that imperfect invoice and sent it on to White & Tenny. He had reminded his employer that their stock of compasses was low and should be replenished. He had directed young

Winters to answer that cablegram from Kingston. Try as he would, he could think of no omission. The books were strictly up to date and everything was moving in the usual routine.

Ah, there he had it! Routine! That was the key to the enigma. It was just that unvarying smooth routine, that endless grinding away at the same familiar things that to-day, when everything about him spoke of change and growth and freedom, was making him restless and perturbed. He was just a cog in the ever-turning wheel. He was a slave to his desk, and not the less a slave because his chains happened to be invisible.

"It won't do," he murmured to himself. "I've got to have a change—some excitement—something!"

With the springtime fermenting in his blood and stirring him to rebellion, he went on, turning out now and then to avoid the trucks that, with a cheerful disregard for police regulations, backed up on the sidewalks to receive their loads from the warehouse doors, until he reached Wall Street. Just beyond was Jones Lane, whose sylvan name seemed strangely out of place in the whirl and hubbub of that crowded district. Here he turned, and, picking his way across the muddy street, went out on the uncovered pier that stretched for five hundred feet into the river.

The pier was buzzing with activity. Bales and

boxes and barrels by the thousands were scattered about in what seemed to be the wildest confusion. Gangs of sweating stevedores trundled their heavy burdens over the gangplanks of the vessels that lay on either side, and great cranes and derricks, their giant claws seizing tons of merchandise at a time, swung creakingly overhead to disgorge their loads into yawning hatchways.

Drew threaded his way through the tangled maze until he reached the end of the pier where the bark *Normandy* was lying.

"Captain Peters around anywhere?" he asked of the second officer, who was superintending the work of the seamen, and had just relieved himself of some remarks that would have made a truck driver envious.

"Below in his cabin, sir," was the answer, and Drew went aboard, walked aft, and swung himself down the narrow stairs that led to the captain's quarters.

He found the skipper sitting at his table, looking over a sheaf of bills of lading.

"Good afternoon, Captain Peters," was Drew's greeting.

"Howdy," responded the captain. "Jest sit down an' make yerself comf'table. I'll be through with these papers in jest a minute or two."

His work concluded, the captain shoved the bills aside with a sigh of relief and looked up.

"I s'pose ye come to see me about that windlass?" he remarked. "But first," he added, as Drew was about to reply, "won't ye have somethin' to wet yer whistle?"

He reached for a decanter and a couple of glasses. Drew smilingly declined, and the captain, nothing daunted, poured out enough for two and drank it in a single Gargantuan swallow.

"I just came to say," explained Drew, as the captain set down the glass, smacking his lips complacently, "that we'll have that windlass over to you by to-morrow, or the next day at the latest. The factory held us up."

"That's all right," replied the captain good-naturedly. "I haven't been worryin' about it. I've been dealin' with Tyke Grimshaw goin' on twenty year an 'he ain't never put me in a hole yet. I knew it would come along in plenty of time fur sailin'."

"By the way, when do you sail, Captain?" asked Drew.

"In a week, more or less. It all depends on how soon we get our cargo stowed."

"What are you carrying?"

"Mostly machinery an' cotton prints fur China and Japan."

"And what will you bring back?"

"Ain't sure about that yet. Owners' orders will be waitin' fur me when we get to Hong Kong.

Probably load up with tea and such truck. Maybe get some copra at some of the islands."

China, Japan, the South Seas! Lands of mystery, adventure and romance! Lands of eternal summer! Azure seas studded with islands like emeralds! Velvet nights spangled with flaming stars!

The wanderlust seized on Allen Drew more fiercely than before, and his heart sickened with longing.

"It must be wonderful to see all those places," he ventured.

"Huh?" said the captain, looking at him blankly.

"I mean," explained the landsman, half ashamed of his enthusiasm, "that everything is so different—so old—so mysterious—so beautiful——. You know what I mean," he ended lamely.

The captain sniffed.

"Pooty enough, I s'pose," he grunted. "But I never pay no 'tention to that. What with layin' my course an' loadin' my cargo an' followin' owners orders, my mind's what ye might call pooty well took up."

The irony of it all! The captain who did not care a copper for romance was going into the very thick of it, while he, Allen Drew, who panted for it, was doomed to forego it forever. Of what use to have the soul of a Viking, if your job is that of a chandler's clerk?

The captain applied himself to the decanter again and Drew roused from his momentary reverie.

"Well," he observed, as he took his hat from the table on which he had thrown it, "I'll keep a sharp eye out for that windlass and see that it is shipped to you the minute it reaches us from the factory."

"All right," responded the captain, rising to his feet. "I'll be lookin' for it. I wouldn't dare risk the old one fur another v'yage."

They shook hands, and Drew climbed the stairs, crossed the deck and went out on to the wharf.

The river was a scene almost as busy as that which lay behind him in the crowded streets of the metropolis. Snorting tugs were darting to and fro, lines of barges were being convoyed toward the Sound, ferryboats were leaving and entering their slips, tramp steamers were poking their way up from Quarantine, and a huge ocean liner was moving majestically toward the Narrows and the open sea beyond.

Drew took off his hat and let the soft breeze cool his brow. Things seemed hopelessly out of gear. He felt like a trapped animal. So he imagined a squirrel might feel, turning the wheel endlessly in the narrow limits of its cage. Or, to make the image human, his thoughts wandered to the shorn and blinded Samson grinding his tale of corn in the Philistine town.

He found himself envying a man who leaned

against a neighboring spile. He was a tall, spare fellow, dressed a little better than the common run of sailors, but unmistakably a sea-faring man. What Drew especially noted was that the stranger had only one eye—and that set in a rather forbidding countenance. Ordinarily he might have pitied him, but in his present mood Drew envied him. The stranger's one remaining eye had, after all, seen more of the world than his own two good optics would likely ever see.

From these fruitless and fantastic musings he roused himself with an effort. A glance at his watch startled him. This would never do. As long as he took Tyke Grimshaw's money he must do Tyke Grimshaw's work.

"Back to the treadmill," he said to himself. grimly; and it was then, as he started for the head of the pier, that he first saw the girl.

He slackened his pace instantly, so as to have her the longer in sight, mentally blessing the bales and boxes that made her progress slow. Not for the world would he have offended her by staring; but he stole covert glances at her from time to time; and with each swift glance the impression she had made upon him grew in strength.

She came on, seemingly unconscious of his presence, until they were almost opposite each other. One hand held her dress from contact with the litter of the dock; in the other she carried what ap-

peared to be a packet of letters. The path she chose led her to the very edge of the dock.

Drew would have passed the next instant had the girl not stopped suddenly, a startled expression becoming visible on her face. The young man turned swiftly. The one-eyed seaman, whose appearance he had previously marked, stood almost at his elbow and confronted the girl.

She stepped back to avoid the seaman, and her foot caught in a coil of rope. For a moment she swayed on the verge of the dock—then Drew's hand shot out, and he caught her arm, steadying her. But the packet she carried flew from her hand and disappeared beyond the stringpiece of the pier.

The girl uttered a little cry of distress. Drew shot a belligerent glance at the one-eyed man.

"What do you want?" he demanded, with truculence. "Isn't the dock broad enough for you to pass without annoying the lady? Get along with you!"

The one-eyed man uttered an oath, but moved away, though slowly. Drew turned to the girl again, hat in hand, a smile chasing the frown from his face.

CHAPTER II

TYKE GRIMSHAW AND HIS AFFAIRS

"I BEG your pardon," Drew said, bowing low, "but can I be of any further assistance?"

The girl looked up at him a little doubtfully, but what she saw in his frank brown eyes must have reassured her, for she spoke without hesitation.

"You are very kind," she answered, "but I fear it is too late. I had some letters in my hand, and when I slipped they went into the water. I'm afraid you can't get them."

Mentally resolving to dive for them if such a procedure became necessary, Drew stepped upon the stringpiece of the pier beside her and looked down.

She gave a joyous exclamation as she saw the package lying in the bottom of a small boat that floated at the stern of a steamer moored to the pier.

"Oh, there they are!" she cried delightedly. "How lucky!" Then her face changed. "But after all it is going to be hard to get them," she added. "The pier is high and there don't seem to be any cleats here to climb down by."

"Easiest thing in the world," returned Drew confidently. "I'll go aboard the steamer, haul the boat up to the stern, and drop into it."

"But the stern is so very high," she said, measuring it with her eye.

"That doesn't matter," he replied. "If you'll just wait here, I'll go aboard and be back with the letters before you know it." He glanced around swiftly. "I don't think that fellow will trouble you again."

"I am not at all afraid of that man. He only startled me for the moment. But I hate to put you to so much trouble," she added, looking at him shyly.

"It will be a pleasure," protested Drew, returning her look with another from which he tried to exclude any undue warmth.

It is to be feared that he was not altogether successful, judging from the faint flush that rose in her cheek as she dropped her gaze before his.

His mind awhirl, the young man hurried up to the gangway of the steamer where he found one of the officers. He briefly explained that he wanted to secure a package that a young lady had dropped into the boat lying astern, and the officer, with an appreciative grin, readily granted permission to him to go aboard.

Drew hurried to the stern, which, as the steamer had discharged her cargo, rose fully twenty feet from the water. He hauled in the boat until it lay directly beneath. Then he gathered up the slack of the painter and wound it about a cleat until it was taut. This done, he dropped over the rail and

let himself down by the rope until his feet touched the thwart of the tender.

He worked his way aft carefully, and picking up the package placed it in his breast pocket. Then he caught hold of the rope and climbed up, hand over hand.

It was unaccustomed work for a landsman, but Drew was supple and athletic and he mounted rapidly. Not for a fortune would he have faltered with those hazel eyes fixed upon him. With the girl watching him, he felt as though he could have climbed to the top of the Woolworth Building.

It was his misfortune that he could not see the look of admiration in her eyes as they followed his movements—a look, however, which by the exercise of maidenly repression she had changed to one of mere gratitude when at last, breathing a little quickly, he approached her with the packet he had recovered in his hand.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, taking it eagerly and clasping it tightly, "how very good of you to take all that trouble! I don't know how to thank you enough."

"It was no trouble at all," Drew responded. "I count myself lucky to have happened along just when you needed me."

His speech won him a radiant smile, and he promptly decided that the dimple in her cheek was not merely distracting. It was divine!

There was a moment of embarrassed silence.

The young man was wild to pursue the conversation. But he was too much of a gentleman to presume on the service he had rendered, and he knew that he should lift his hat and depart.

One feeble resource was left by which he might reconcile duty with desire.

"It's very hard getting about on this crowded pier," he ventured, "and you see there are some rough characters around. You might perhaps like to have me see you safely to the street when you are ready to go?"

She hesitated for a moment, her own inclination evidently battling with convention. But convention won.

"I think not," she said, flashing him a smile that softened her refusal and at the same time completed his undoing. "You see it is broad daylight and I am perfectly safe. Thank you for the offer though, and thank you again for what you have done for me."

It was dismissal, none the less final because it was gracious, and Drew yielded to the inevitable.

He glanced back once or twice, assuring himself that it was his plain duty to keep her in sight in order to see that nothing happened to her. He found himself wishing that she would drop the letters overboard again—that the one-eyed man would reappear—that something would occur, however slight, to call him to her side once more. It was

with a thrill of exultation that he saw her approach the gangplank of the *Normandy*.

Then, for a moment, at least, he was sure he was going to have his wish. He spied the one-eyed man coming into view from behind a heap of freight and approach the boarding-plank. He spoke to the girl and she halted.

Drew was on the point of darting back to the girl's rescue. But the seaman's attitude was respectful, and it seemed that what he said was not offensive. At least, the girl listened attentively, nodded when the man had finished speaking, and as the latter fell back she tripped lightly aboard the *Normandy,* and so disappeared.

Drew's curiosity was so great that he might have lingered until the girl came ashore again, but the one-eyed man was coming up the dock and the young fellow was cooler now and felt that it would not be the part of wisdom to have another altercation with the rough looking stranger. Perhaps, after all, the one-eyed man had merely spoken to the girl to ask pardon for having previously startled her.

"Well," Drew said to himself, "Peters knows her and can tell me all about her. Anyhow I know her name and I'll find out where she lives if I have to search New York from end to end."

For on the envelope that had lain uppermost when he had picked up the package from the grating of the tender, he had seen the name, "Ruth

Adams." The address had escaped him in that momentary glance, and although he could have easily repaired the omission while he was passing back along the steamer's deck, his instincts revolted at anything that looked like prying.

But there was nothing in his code that forbade his using every legitimate means of searching her out and securing an introduction in the way dictated by the approved forms, and he promised himself that the episode should not end here.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast," especially when that breast is a youthful one, and Allen Drew's thoughts spun a dozen rainbow visions as he made his way back to the shop whose insistent call he had for the last hour put aside. He walked automatically and only that sixth sense peculiar to city dwellers prevented his being run down more than once. But the objurgations of startled drivers as they brought up their vehicles with a jerk bothered him not a whit. His physical presence was on South Street but his real self was on the crowded pier where he had left Ruth Adams.

Still moving on mechanically, he entered the door of the chandlery shop, over which a signboard, dingy with age, announced that "T. Grimshaw" was the proprietor. He nodded absently in response to the salutations of Sam, the negro porter, and Winters, the junior clerk, and sat down at his desk.

The building that housed the chandlery shop was

a very old one, dating back to a time previous to the Revolution. When it was erected the Boston "Tea Party" was still in the future. If its old walls could have spoken they might have told of the time when almost all New York was housed below Chambers Street; when the "Bouwerie," free from its later malodorous associations, was a winding country lane where lads and lasses carried on their courtships in the long summer evenings; when Cherry Hill, now notorious for its fights and factions, was the abode of the city's wealth and fashion; when Collect Pond, on whose site the Tombs now stands, was the skating center where New York's belles and beaux disported themselves; when merry parties picnicked in the woods and sylvan glades of Fourteenth Street.

Those same walls, looking across the East River, had seen the prison ship *Jersey,* in whose foul and festering holds had died so many patriots. And they had shaken to the salvos of artillery that greeted Washington, when, at the end of the Revolutionary War, he had landed at the Battery and had gone in pomp to Fraunce's Tavern for a farewell dinner to his officers.

In its day it had been a stout and notable building, and even now it might be good for another hundred years. But the inexorable march of progress and the worth of the land on which it stood had sealed its doom. Grimshaw had occupied it

for twenty years, but when he sought to renew his lease he had been told that no renewal would be granted. He could still occupy the building and pay the rent from month to month. But he now held possession only on sufferance, and it was distinctly understood that he might be called upon to vacate at any time on a few days' notice.

But "threatened men live long," and it was beginning to look as though the same might be said of the old building. For two years the months had come and gone without any hint of change, and Tyke had settled down in the belief that the building would last as long as he did. After that it did not matter. He had no kith or kin to whom to leave his business.

He was a grim and grizzled old fellow, well on in his sixties. In his earlier days he had been a master mariner, and had sailed all the Seven Seas. He had rounded the Horn a dozen times; had scudded with reefed topsails in the "roaring forties"; had lost two fingers of his left hand in a fight with Malay pirates; had battled with waterspouts, tornadoes and typhoons; had harpooned whales in the Arctic; had lost a ship by fire, and been shipwrecked twice; and from these combats with men and nature he had emerged as tough and hardy as a pine knot.

The profits of a notable whaling expedition from which he had returned with the tanks filled to bursting, barrels crowded on the deck, and the very scup-

pers running oil, together with a tidy little inheritance that fell to him about the same time, had enabled him to buy the chandlery shop from its former proprietor and settle down to spend the rest of his life ashore and yet in sight and scent of salt water.

How he had gained the name of "Tyke," by which everybody called him, nobody knew. He himself never volunteered to tell, and in all his bills and accounts used only the initial "T." Some of his employees favored Tyrus, others Titus. One in a wild flight of fancy suggested Ticonderoga. But the mystery remained unsolved, and, after all, as the checks that bore the scrawl, "T. Grimshaw," were promptly honored at the bank, it did not matter.

He was not what could be called an enterprising business man and there were many houses in his line that made a more pretentious appearance, carried a larger stock, and had a much more extensive trade. But he lived frugally, discounted his bills, and had such a broad acquaintance among seafaring men that each year's end showed a neat profit on his books.

His store force was modest, being only three in number. Allen Drew was a sort of general manager, and Tyke was growing more and more into the habit of leaving the conduct of the business to him. Winters was the junior clerk. He had come

direct from high school and was now in his second year of service. Then there was Sam, the colored porter and man of all work, whose last name was as much a mystery as Grimshaw's first.

Drew took up some papers that had been laid on his desk during his absence, and tried to fix his mind upon them. He was dimly aware that somebody had entered the store door, had spoken to Winters, and that the junior clerk had shown the visitor into Grimshaw's private office.

But Allen Drew's thoughts were too far afield to be caught by this incident, or to become easily concentrated upon humdrum business affairs. He laid down the papers, and sighed.

He began to day-dream again. In the whole category of feminine names was there ever one so pretty as Ruth? And surely never did a girl, in both form and feature, so fit the name.

Suddenly he realized that the door of the private office was open and that Grimshaw's head was thrust out.

"Hey! Come here a minute, Allen," he called.

There was a note of trouble in the old man's voice, and Tyke's face expressed some strong emotion. Alert on the instant, Drew rose to obey his employer's summons.

CHAPTER III

HARD HIT

DREW was not surprised to find that his employer was not alone. A man whom he now recognized as the agent of the estate controlling the building was seated at one end of the desk and was drumming upon it with his fingers.

Tyke was hunched up in his big revolving chair with a look of agitation on his face. His hands were clenching and unclenching rapidly. It was evident that something much out of the ordinary had occurred to rob him of his usual placidity.

He motioned Drew to a seat.

"Well, Allen," began Grimshaw, in a voice that he tried in vain to render calm, "it's come at last. We've got to get out of the old place."

"What?" cried the young man; yet this only confirmed the suspicion which his recognition of the visitor had suggested.

"We're sorry, of course," purred the agent, who had tried to break the unwelcome news to the old man as easily as possible. "But, of course, you know that you held the place on the distinct understanding that we should take possession at will."

"I ain't denying that, Mr. Blake," admitted Tyke. "There's isn't anything underhand or wrong about

what you're doing. I kept on here with my eyes wide open and I'm ready to take my medicine. But all the same, it comes as a shock. I'd hoped to hold on to the old craft as long as I lived."

"I wish you could, both for your sake and ours," returned Blake. "We haven't a tenant anywhere who pays his rent more promptly and bothers us less about repairs. But the trustees of the estate have had an offer from parties who want to put up a more modern building on this site, and it was too good to decline."

"When are they going to start?" asked Drew.

"They're in something of a hurry," replied the agent. "You see this is the right time of the year for construction work, and they want to have the foundations laid by fall."

"It's only a matter of days then before we have to find another place?" went on Drew.

"Oh, I should hardly say that," replied Blake, soothingly. "You know how those things are. They'll have a lot to do in the way of plans and contracts before they get down to the actual work of building. Still," he went on, more cautiously, "they may get busy on wrecking the old building at almost any time, and I'd advise you as a friend not to let the grass grow under your feet. You've got a lot of stuff here, and it will take a good deal of time to move it. If I were you, I'd figure on being out in a week or ten days."

"Ten days!" groaned Tyke. "An' I haven't even got a place to go to."

"It may take some hustling," admitted the agent. "But a good deal can be done in a short time when you have to. I'll look around, and if I learn of any place that would suit you I'll let you know."

There was little else to be said, and after another expression of regret at the unpleasant duty he had had to perform, Blake took his leave.

The two men left in the office, contrasting types of age and youth, looked at each other for a moment without speaking. Allen Drew had a real affection for his employer, who for some time past had treated him more like a son than an employee, and he was genuinely shocked to see how this blow had affected him.

"Don't mind, Mr. Grimshaw," he said cheerily. "It doesn't mean the end of the world. We'll find another place that is just as good. And this time we'll get a lease, so we won't have to worry about being routed out in this way."

Tyke shook his head dismally.

"That's all very well for you youngsters," he replied. "You're at an age when you'd as soon change as not. But I've kind o' stuck my kedge deep into the old place, an' it's like plucking my heart out to have to up anchor and make sail for another port."

The younger man thought it would be best to

leave Grimshaw alone for a while, and he rose briskly to his feet.

"If you say so, I'll go out and look around," he suggested. "I've had this thing in the back of my mind for some time past, and I know of two or three likely places that may fill the bill."

"All right," assented Tyke apathetically. "Jest tell Winters to look after things in the shop while you're gone. I reckon I won't be much good for the rest of the afternoon."

Drew went out, and after imparting the news, which shocked Winters and Sam, put on his hat and left the office.

That morning he had been hoping for a change. This afternoon he was getting it with a vengeance.

It was desirable from every standpoint that the new place should be as near to the old one as possible. This consideration limited his choice to two buildings which he knew were vacant, and toward these he bent his steps.

The first place he vsited had just been rented, but at the second he had better luck. He returned about four o'clock and burst into the store, flushed and jubilant.

"I've found it," he announced, going into the private office. "Just what the doctor ordered. Plenty of room, a better pair of show windows than we have here, and a long-time lease for a rent that's only a trifle more than we're paying now."

Tyke looked up with the first sign of animation he had shown since Blake's visit.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"Just on the next block," answered Drew. "Turner's old place."

"We'll go right over now an' look at it," said Tyke, rising and putting on his hat.

After inspecting the three floors thoroughly, Grimshaw agreed with his young manager that they were in luck to get the building. A visit to the agent followed, and before they left his office Tyke had handed over a check for the first month's rent and had a five-year lease in his pocket.

"A good piece of work, Alien, my boy," he said, as they parted outside the shop that night. "I don't know what I'd do without you. But I'm mighty sorry to have to leave the old place. No other will ever seem exactly like it."

"Poor old Tyke," mused Drew, as he looked after the retreating figure that suddenly seemed older than he had ever seen it. "He's hard hit."

In all the stir and bustle of that crowded afternoon, Drew had been conscious of a glow at his heart that was not due to mere business excitement. One name had been upon his lips, one thought had sought to monopolize him. And now that business was over for the day, he yielded utterly to the obsession of that meeting on the wharf.

Instead of striding uptown as usual, he turned

in the other direction and went down to the Jones Lane pier, now for the most part deserted and quiet in the waning light. Here and there a watchman sat on a bale smoking his pipe, while occasionally a sailor lay a more or less unsteady course for his ship.

Drew made his way to where the *Normandy* was moored, and asked for Captain Peters.

"Gone ashore, sir," said the man he addressed. "Some friends of his came aboard this afternoon and he's gone off with them to celebrate."

There was a grin on the man's face as he spoke, and this, together with his recollection of the decanter, left no illusions in Drew's mind as to the character of the celebration.

"Any message to leave for the captain, sir?" the man inquired.

"Nothing important," returned Drew carelessly. "I may drop around and see him to-morrow." And he blessed the belated windlass which would give him a reasonable excuse for returning.

But even though the captain was absent, there were other things at hand that spoke of the girl with the hazel eyes. There was the place where she had dropped the letters. There was the post against which she had leaned as she watched him recover them. And there, as he bent over the edge of the pier, he saw the little boat that had played its part in the day's happenings.

How musical her voice was! And she had smiled at him once—no, twice! Smiled not only with her lips but with her eyes.

He thought of her as he went slowly uptown. He thought of her until he went to sleep and then his thinking changed to dreaming.

Decidedly, Tyke was not the only one who was hard hit on that eventful day.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHADOWS OF ROMANCE

When Allen Drew opened his eyes the next morning, he was conscious of an unusual feeling of elation. He lay for a moment in the twilight zone between sleeping and waking, seeking the reason. Then in a flash it came to him.

He was out of bed in a twinkling. Life was too full and rich now to waste it in sleep. Yesterday morning it had seemed drab and commonplace. To-day it sparkled with prismatic hues. He was a new man in a new world.

He found himself whistling from sheer excess of good spirits as he moved about the room. He hurried through his shower and dressing in record time. Then he despatched his breakfast with a speed and absent-mindedness that were most unusual for him and evoked the mild astonishment of his landlady. A few minutes later he had joined the hurrying throng that was moving toward the nearest subway station. He left the train at Fulton Street and surprised Winters by appearing at the shop a half hour earlier than his usual time.

There were two reasons for pressing haste on this morning. The moving from the old quarters

to the new involved an amount of work that was appalling. There were a thousand things to be done, and for the next week or ten days the force of three employees must work at top speed. Current business would have to be attended to as usual, and in addition there was the colossal task of removing the contents of the three crowded floors from the old building to the new.

There was a second task which, in Drew's secret heart, seemed the more important. That was to discover the address of the girl he had met on the pier and learn what he could about her.

In the first flush of determination this had seemed to be a comparatively easy matter. The very fact that he wanted it so badly seemed to guarantee his success. Such difficulties as suggested themselves he waved airily aside. No young Lochinvar coming out of the West had felt more certain of carrying off his Ellen than Allen Drew had felt the night before of finding Miss Ruth Adams. But when he applied his mind to the task in the cold light of day, it did not seem so easy and he was hazy as to the best way to go about it.

He opened his desk, and before looking at the mail that mutely besought his attention, he reached for the huge city directory and opened to the letter "A." He was appalled to find how many Adamses there were. There were dozens, scores, hundreds! Even with the firm and corporation names elimi-

nated, the individual Adamses were legion. And not one of them had Ruth before it.

This, however, he had hardly expected. She was too young to be listed separately, and would probably be included under the name of her father or her mother.

He had had a vague idea that, if there were not too many Adamses, he might take them one by one and by discreet inquiries in the neighborhood of each find out if the family included a young lady named Ruth. If he succeeded, that would be a great point gained. What he should do after that he would have been puzzled to tell. But he had a desperate hope that, hovering in the vicinity, some way, somehow, he could manage to secure an introduction.

But now, with this formidable array of names before him, his plan vanished into thin air. Life was too short, and he could not wait for eternity!

And how did he know that she lived in the city at all? It was probable, but not at all certain. She might simply be here on a visit; and for all he knew her permanent home might be Chicago or San Francisco.

Clearly, he must see Captain Peters without loss of time. The girl had gone aboard his bark, and the probability was that her errand had been with him.

He looked hastily through the mail, and was glad

to see that it included a notification from the freight department of the railroad that a windlass consigned to "T. Grimshaw" had arrived and was awaiting his orders.

"I'll just drop around to see Peters and set his mind at rest about that windlass," he said to Winters, reaching for his hat.

"I thought you did that yesterday," replied Winters.

"I told him we expected it," said Drew, flushing a little; "but he may be worrying about it, being delayed on the way. He's an old customer of ours and we want to keep on the right side of him."

Winters looked his surprise at this sudden spasm of business anxiety, but said nothing further, and Drew hastened down to the Jones Lane pier and boarded the *Normandy*. But again he was doomed to meet with disappointment.

"Sorry, sir," said the second officer, biting off a chew from a plug of tobacco, "but the skipper can't be seen just now. Just came aboard a little while ago and there was a friend on either side of him. You know how it is," and he winked. "He's below now, sound asleep, and 'twould be as much as my billet's worth to disturb him."

"Well," Drew said thoughtfully, "that windlass he ordered has arrived and I'll see that it's carted down here to-day. But there was another matter I wanted to speak to him about."

"Better wait a day or two if it's any favor you want to ask the old man," advised the seaman. "Let his coppers get cooled first. A better nagivator than Cap'n Peters never stepped, and he don't lush none 'twixt port and port; but he's no mamma's angel child when his coppers is hot, believe me!"

"Thanks. I'll remember," Drew said. "Of course you did not notice the young lady who came aboard here yesterday afternoon just after I left?"

"Didn't I, though?" responded the second officer of the *Normandy*. "My eye!"

"Do you know who she is?" blurted out Drew.

"No, sir. But the skipper does, I reckon."

"All right," Drew said, and turned to descend the plank to the dock. As he did so he found himself confronting the one-eyed man who had figured in the incident on the dock the previous afternoon.

The fellow's countenance was raised to his own as Drew came down the plank, and the latter obtained a good view of the scarred face.

It was almost beardless, and even the brows were so light and scanty that they lent no character to the remaining shallow, furtive blue eye. The empty socket gave a horribly grim appearance to the whole face.

Momentary as Drew's scrutiny was, he saw that the one-eyed man was intoxicated. Not desiring to engage in a controversy with a stranger in that con-

dition, he would have passed on quickly, but the fellow would not step aside.

"Just let me pass, will you?" Drew said, eyeing the other warily.

"You lubberly swab!" the one-eyed man said thickly, and with it spat out a vile epithet that instantly raised a flame of hot anger in Allen Drew.

He plunged down the plank, his fists clenched and his eyes ablaze. The one-eyed man was by no means unsteady on his legs; he met the charge of the young fellow boldly enough.

But Drew dodged his swing, and having all the push of his descent of the plank behind the straight-arm jolt he landed on the other's jaw, the impact was terrific.

"Whee!" yelled the second officer of the *Normandy*, leaning on the rail, an interested spectator. "That's a soaker!"

Others came running to the scene. A fight will bring a crowd quicker than any other happening.

The one-eyed man had been driven back against the nearest pile of freight. Drew was after him before he could recover from that first blow, and he got in a couple of other punches that ended the encounter—for the time being, at least. His antagonist went to the floor of the dock and stayed there.

"Beat it, 'bo!" advised a seaman at the *Normandy's* rail. "Here comes the cop."

Drew accepted the advice as good, dodged around a tier of freight, and so escaped. He was not of a quarrelsome disposition; yet somehow the memory of those three blows he had struck gave him a deal of satisfaction.

"I never supposed those sparring lessons at the gym would come in so handy," he thought, hurrying officeward. Then he chuckled. "Yesterday I was grouching because nothing ever happened to me. And look at it now! That fellow had it coming to him, that's all. I wonder who he is. Like enough I'll never see him again."

But he was never more mistaken in his life than in this surmise.

Grimshaw had come in by the time Drew got back to the shop, and was busy in his office. Winters and Sam were condoling with each other over the amount of work that lay before them.

"It's a whale of a job," complained Winters, looking about the crowded shop.

"Ah kin feel de mis'ry comin' into ma back ag'in," groaned Sam, who had formerly been a piano mover, but had been obliged to seek a less strenuous occupation because of having wrenched his back. "Ah suttinly will be ready fo' de hospital when Ah gits t'rough wid dis movin'."

"Oh, you're just plain lazy, Sam," chaffed Drew. "It won't be half so bad as you think. We'll have a gang of truckmen and their helpers to do most

of the heavy work. But I suppose we've got our hands full, packing these instruments so they won't be broken and scratched. And 'hustle' is the word from now on."

"But think of the junk upstairs!" groaned Winters. "Why doesn't the old man call in the Salvation Army and give them the whole bunch on condition that they take it away? He's got the accumulation of twenty years on that top floor, and it's not worth the powder to blow it up. It beats me why Tyke keeps all that old clutter."

"It doesn't seem worth house room," admitted Drew; "and now that we're moving, perhaps we can get rid of a lot of the stuff. I'll speak to Tyke about it. But let's forget the upper floors and get busy on this one. There's a man's job right here."

"A giant's job, to my way of thinking," grumbled Winters, as he looked around him.

It was indeed a varied and extensive stock that was carried on the main floor. To name it all would have been to enumerate almost everything that is used on shipboard, whether driven by wind or by steam. Thermometers, barometers, binoculars, flanges, couplings, carburetors, lamps, lanterns, fog horns, pumps, check valves, steering wheels, galley stoves, fire buckets, hand grenades, handspikes, shaftings, lubricants, wire coils, rope, sea chests, life preservers, spar varnish, copper paint, pulleys, ensigns, twine, clasp knives, boat hooks, chronom-

eters, ship clocks, rubber boots, fur caps, splicing compounds, friction tape, cement, wrenches, hinges, screws, oakum, oars, anchors—it was no wonder that the force quailed at sight of the work that lay before them.

They set to work smartly and had already made notable progress when Tyke stepped out of the private office. He looked around with a melancholy smile.

"Dismantling the old ship, I see," he observed to Drew.

"Right on the job," replied the young man, glad to note that Tyke seemed to have somewhat recovered his equanimity after the trying events of the day before.

Grimshaw watched them for a while, making a suggestion now and then but leaving most of the direction of the work to his chief clerk while he ruminated over the coming change.

At last he roused himself.

"Better leave things to Winters now and come upstairs with me," he said to Drew. "There's a heap of stuff up there, and we want to figure on where we're going to stow it all in the new place."

Drew followed him and they mounted to the second floor. Here the surplus stock was held in reserve, and there was nothing that could be dispensed with. But the third floor held a bewildering collection that made it a veritable curiosity shop.

When they reached this, Drew looked about and was inclined to agree with Winters in classifying it as "junk."

All the discarded and defective stock of the last twenty years had found a refuge here. And in addition to this debris there was a pile of sailors' boxes and belongings that reached to the roof. Tyke had a warm spot in his heart for sailormen, especially if they chanced to have sailed with him on any of his numerous voyages; and when they were stranded and turned to him for help they never met with refusal.

In some cases this help had taken the form of money loans or gifts. At other times he had taken care of the chests containing their meagre belongings, while they were waiting for a chance to ship, or perhaps were compelled to go to a hospital.

In the course of a score of years, these boxes had increased in number until now they usurped a great part of the space on that upper floor. Drew had often been on the point of suggesting that they be got rid of, but as long as they did not encroach on the space actually needed by the business this thought had remained unspoken. Now, when they were about to move and needed to have their work lightened as much as possible, the time seemed opportune to dispose of the problem.

Tyke listened with a twinkle in his eye as Allen repeated the suggestion of Winters that the con-

tents of the floor be hold for what it would bring or given to the Salvation Army.

"Might be a good idea, I s'pose," he remarked. "Them old things ain't certainly doing any one any good. An' yet, somehow, I've never been able to bring myself to the point of getting rid of 'em. Seems as though they were a sort of trust. Though I s'pose most of the boys they belonged to are dead and gone long ago."

"I don't imagine there's anything really valuable in any of the chests," remarked Drew.

"No, I don't think the hull kit an' boodle of 'em is worth twenty dollars," acquiesced the old man. "Although you can't always tell. Sometimes the richest things are found in onlikely places. But I kind of hate to part with these old boxes. Almost every one of 'em has something about it that reminds me of old times.

"You know I ain't much of a reading man," Grimshaw went on, "an' these boxes make the only library I have. I come up here an' moon around sometimes when I git sick of living ashore, an' these old chests seem to talk to me. They smell of the sea an' tell of the sea, an' each one of 'em has some history connected with it."

Drew scented a story, and as Tyke's tales, while sometimes garrulous, were always interesting, he forebore to interrupt and disposed himself to listen.

"Now take that box over there, for instance,"

continued Tyke, pointing to a stained and mildewed chest which bore all the marks of great age and rough handling. "That belonged to Manuel Gomez, dead ten year since. He went down in the *Nancy Boardman* when she was rounding the Cape. Big, dark, upstanding man he was, an' one of the best bo'suns that ever piped a watch to quarters in a living gale.

"An' he was as good a fighting man as he was sailor. Nobody I'd rather have at my side in a scrap. He was right up in front with me when those Malay pirates boarded us off the Borneo coast. Those brown devils came over the side like a tidal wave, an' no matter how many we downed, they still kep' coming on.

"It was nip an' tuck for a while, but we were fighting for our lives, an' we beat 'em off at last an' sent what was left of 'em tumbling into their praus. As it was, they sliced off two of my fingers, an' one fellow would have buried that crooked kriss of his in my neck if Manuel hadn't cut him down jest in time.

"Of course, I was grateful to him for saving my life, an' he sailed with me for several voyages after that. That scrap with the pirates never seemed to do him an awful lot of good. He had pirates on the brain anyway. You see, he come from Trinidad on the Spanish Main, where the old pirates used to do their plundering an' butchering, an' I s'pose he'd

heard talk about their doings ever since he was a boy.

"He used to talk about 'em whenever he got a chance. Of course, discipline being what it is on board ship, he couldn't talk as free with me as I s'pose he did with his mates. But once in a while he'd reel off a yarn, an' then he'd hint kind of mysterious like that he knew where some of the old Pirates' doubloons were buried an' that some day, if luck was with him, he'd be a rich man.

"I'd heard so much of that kind o' stuff in my time that I used to laugh at him, an' then he'd get peeved—that is, as peeved as he dared to be, me being skipper. But that wouldn't last long, and after a while he'd be at it again. Jest seemed as though he couldn't get away from the thought of it."

"Perhaps there was something in it after all," said Drew, to whom just now anything that savored of adventure appealed more strongly than usual.

"More likely his brain was a bit touched," replied Grimshaw carelessly. "I lost sight of him for several years when I quit the sea. But just before he went on his last voyage, he wanted me to take charge of this chest of his until he returned. Said he didn't dare trust it with any one else.

" 'All right, Manuel. No diamonds or anything of that kind in it, I s'pose?' I says with a laugh and a wink.

"But he didn't crack a smile.

"'Somet'in' wort' more zan diamon's,' he said solemnly, an' went away. I never saw him again, an' a few months later I heard of the *Nancy Boardman's* going down with all hands."

"Why not examine the chest?" cried Drew eagerly.

The recital of the grizzled veteran had fired his blood. All that he had ever read or heard of the old buccaneers came back to him. In fancy he saw them all, Avery, Kidd, Bartholomew Roberts, Stede Bonnet, Blackbeard Morgan, the whole black-hearted and blood-stained crew of daring leaders ranging up and down the waters of the Spanish Main, plundering, sacking, killing, boarding the stately galleons of Spain, sending peaceful merchant ships to the bottom, wasting their gains in wild orgies ashore capturing Panama and Maracaibo amid torrents of blood and flame. Silks and jewels and brocades and pearls and gold! From the whole world they had taken tribute, until that world—tried at last beyond bearing—had risen in its might and ground the whole nest of vipers beneath its wrathful heel.

Tyke looked at the young man quizzically.

"Thinking of the pirate doubloons, Allen?"

"Why not?" Drew defended himself, albeit a little sheepishly. "Perhaps the key to treasure is right over there in that old chest of Manuel's."

Then Tyke laughed outright.

CHAPTER V

A SETBACK

"I WOULDN'T bank on finding treasure," Grimshaw advised. "What those old pirates got they spent as they went along. They warn't of the saving kind. 'Easy come, easy go' was their motto."

"That's true enough of the majority of them, no doubt," conceded Drew. "The comon sailors got only a small portion of the loot anyway. But some of the leaders were shrewd and far-sighted men. They didn't look forward to dying as pirates. They wanted to save enough to buy their pardons later on and live the rest of their lives ashore in peace and luxury. What was more natural than that they should hide their shares of the plunder on some of the little islands they were familiar with? They wouldn't dare to keep it on their ships, where their throats might be cut at any moment if their crews knew there was treasure aboard."

"That's true enough," admitted his employer.

"And if they did bury it," pursued the young man, encouraged by this concession, "why shouldn't a good deal of it be there yet? Gold and silver and jewels don't perish from being kept underground. And as most of the pirates died in battle, they had

no chance to go back and dig the plunder up from where they had buried it."

"But some of the crews must have been in the secret," objected Tyke, "an' after the death of their captains what was to hinder them from going after the doubloons an' getting 'em."

"There might have been a good many reasons," answered Drew. "In the first place, the captains seem to have had a cheerful little habit of killing the men who did the digging and leaving their skeletons to guard the treasure-chests. And even when that didn't happen, what chance would the common sailor have had of going after the loot? He couldn't have got a ship without giving away his secret, and the minute he'd given it away his own life wouldn't have been worth a copper cent.

"And then, too," went on Drew, warming to his subject, "look at all the traditions there are on the subject. Where there is so much smoke there must be some fire. A single rumor wouldn't amount to much, but when that rumor persists and is multiplied by a thousand others until it becomes a settled belief, there must be something in it. The rumors are like so many spokes of a wheel all pointing to a single hub, and that hub is—treasure!"

"I declare! you're getting all het up about it," grinned Tyke, as Drew paused for breath. "But all the same, my boy, you want to get back to earth. You've got as good a chance of finding hidden

treasure as I have of taking first prize in a beauty show."

"What's the matter with taking a look in Manuel's box and finding out what it was he was so anxious about?" questioned Drew, a little dashed by Tyke's skepticism.

"Well, perhaps we shall some time later on," conceded Tyke, somewhat doubtfully. We can't think of doing it until we git moved an' settled. We've got enough on hand now to keep us as busy as ants for a good many days to come."

Drew was disappointed, but as his employer had spoken there was nothing more to be said, and he regretfully followed Grimshaw to the ground floor.

The chronicle of his life for the rest of that day and the two following could be summed up in the one word, work—hard, breathless, unceasing work. A reminder had come from Blake that the moving must be expedited, and from Tyke himself down to Sam no one was exempt.

Not that the thought of Ruth Adams was ever for long out of Drew's mind. But the colors had grown more sombre in his rainbow of hope. He had snatched a few moments from his noon hour on the second day to run over to the *Normandy,* and although this time he saw Captain Peters, it was only to learn that he could expect no help from that quarter.

The captain was curt and irritable after his pro-

longed drinking bout, and answered chiefly in monosyllables. No, he had not seen any young girl come aboard two days before. Did not know of any one who had.

"Now you git out," snarled Peters in conclusion. "You'll git no information here. Make no mistake about that!"

Drew was startled by the change in Captain Peters' manner and look. The skipper glared at him as though Drew were a strange dog trying to get the other's bone. The young man's temper was instantly rasped; but Peters was a considerably older man than he, and he seemed to be laboring under some misapprehension.

"I assure you, Captain Peters," Drew said, "my reasons for asking were perfectly honorable."

"You needn't assure me of anything. Just git out!" roared the skipper of the *Normandy;* and, seeing that there was nothing but a fight in prospect if he remained, the young man withdrew. On deck he saw the second officer, and that person winked at him knowingly and followed him to the plank.

"Old man on the rampage?" he asked.

"Seems to be," said the confused Drew.

"Chance was, that that Bug-eye you knocked out the other day is a pertic'lar friend of the skipper's. But gosh! you're some boy with your mits."

Drew might again have tried to find out from this fellow about the girl, but he shrank from making

her the subject of any general inquiry or discussion. To him she was something to be kept sacred. His heart was a shrine with her as its image, and before that image he burned imaginary tapers with the fervor of a devotee.

One thought came to him with a suddenness that made him quake Could it be that she was already married?

He tried to remember whether "Mrs." or "Miss" had preceded the name on the letter. For the life of him he could not recall. He had so utterly assumed that she was unmarried, on the occasion of their meeting, that any thought to the contrary had not even occurred to him then. He was somewhat comforted by the probability that, had she been married, her husband's name or initials would have followed the "Mrs." instead of her given name. Yet, this was a custom that was becoming as much honored in the breach as in the observance, and the use of her own given name would not be at all conclusive.

Then, with a great wave of relief, the memory came to him that he had placed the letters in her left hand and had noted that she had no rings on that hand at all. The thought had come to him at the time that no ornament could make those taper fingers prettier than they were.

His heart leaped with elation. She was unmarried then! She wore no wedding ring!

There was still greater cause for jubilation. She wore no ring of any kind! She was not even engaged!

She probably was somewhere in this teeming city. Many times their paths might almost cross, perhaps had already almost crossed since that first meeting on the pier.

Fantastic musings took possession of him. Who was it that, in a burst of hyperbole, said that if one took up his station at Broadway and Thirty-fourth Street, he would, if he stayed there long enough, see everybody in the world go past? Or was it Kipling who said that of Port Said?

Where should he take his stand? What places should he frequent with the greatest likelihood of meeting her? Theatres, the opera, art galleries, railway stations, Central Park?

He recalled himself from these fantasies with a wrench. How foolish and fruitless they were! He was no man of leisure, to do as he pleased. He was bound as securely to his desk as the genie was to the lamp of Aladdin, and he must answer its call just as unfailingly.

So, alternately wretched and elated, tasting the torments as well as the joys of this experience that had revolutionized his life, he tore desperately into his work, but with the girl's face ever before him.

On the third day after Tyke had received notice to move, the preparations were far advanced. Deli-

cate instruments had been carefully wrapped; heavier objects had been clothed with burlap; truckmen were notified to be ready on the following day. Tyke and Drew had made frequent pilgrimages to the new place and had arranged where the stock could be placed to the best advantage. New bills and letterheads had been ordered from the printers, and even the old sign over the door, which Tyke obstinately refused to leave behind, had been taken down to have the old number painted out and the new one substituted.

There was no elevator in the old building. Drew had often urged Grimshaw to have one installed, but the old man was dead set against any such "new-fangled contraptions." So, everything from the upper lofts, when it was called for, had to be carried or rolled down the rickety stairs, a proceeding which often roused rumbles of rebellion in the breast of Sam, upon whom fell the brunt of the heavy work.

He had spent most of that afternoon in getting down the boxes from the third floor so that they might be within easier reach of the truckmen when the moving should begin. He was on his way down with one of them, perspiring profusely and tired from the work that had gone before, when, as he neared the lowest step, he slipped and dropped his burden.

He was fortunate enough to scramble out of the

way of the box and thus escape injury. But the box itself came to the floor with a crash, and split open.

Drew and Winters sprang to the help of the porter, and were relieved to find that he was not hurt. He rose to his feet, his black face a picture of consternation.

"Dat ole mis'ry in ma back done cotched me jes' when Ah got to de las' step," he explained. "Ah hope dey ain't much damage done to dat 'er box."

"Pretty badly done up, it seems to me," remarked Winters, as he surveyed the broken chest critically.

"Never mind, Sam," consoled Drew. "It wasn't your fault and the old box wasn't of much account anyway."

Just then Tyke thrust his head out of his office to learn the meaning of the crash. At the sight of the broken box he came into the shop.

"How did this happen?" he asked.

"Ah couldn't help it, Mistah Grimshaw," said Sam ruefully. "Ma back jes' nacherly give way, an Ah had to let go. Ah'm pow'ful sorry, sah."

Sam was a favorite with the old man, who refrained from scolding him but stood a moment looking curiously at the box.

"Carry it into the office," he said at last to Sam. "And you, Allen, come along."

CHAPTER VI

THE BROKEN CHEST

SAM lifted the big chest, and, very carefully this time to make amends for his previous dereliction, carried it into the private office. He placed it on two chairs that his employer indicated and then withdrew, closing the door softly behind him and rejoicing at having got off so easily.

"Well, Allen," remarked Tyke, wiping his glasses and replacing them on the bridge of his nose, "you're going to get your wish sooner than either one of us expected."

"What do you mean?" asked Drew wonderingly.

"Don't you see anything familiar about this box?" replied Tyke, answering a question in Yankee fashion by asking one.

"I don't know that I do," responded the other. Then, as he bent over to examine the broken chest more closely, he corrected himself.

"Why, yes I do!" he cried eagerly. "Isn't this the one you pointed out to me the other day as belonging to the man who fought with you against the Malays?"

"That's it," confirmed Tyke. "It's Manuel Gomez's box. Queer," he went on reflectively, "that of all the chests there were in that loft the only one we thought of looking in should burst open at our very feet. If I was superstitious" (here Drew

smothered a smile, for he knew that Tyke was nothing if not superstitious), "I might think there was some meaning in it. But of course," he added hastily, "we know there isn't."

"Of course," acquiesced the younger man.

Tyke seemed rather disappointed at this ready assent.

"Well, anyway, now that it has opened right under our noses, so to speak, we'll look into it. I guess we've got far enough ahead with our moving to take the time."

Drew, who was burning with curiosity and impatience, agreed with him heartily.

The chest had split close to the lock, so that it was an easy matter after a minute or two of manipulation to throw the cover back.

A musty, discolored coat lay on top, and Tyke was just about to lift this out when Winters stuck his head into the office.

"Some one to see you, sir," he announced.

Tyke gave a little grunt of impatience.

"Tell him I'm busy," he snapped. Then he caught himself up. "Wait a minute," he said. "Did he tell you his name?"

"No, sir," returned Winters. "But I'll find out." In a moment he was back. "Captain Rufus Hamilton, he says."

The petulant expression on Grimshaw's face changed instantly to one of pleasure.

"Bring him right in," he ordered.

Drew, thinking that Grimshaw would wish to see his friend alone, rose to follow Winters.

"I suppose we'll put this off until after he's gone," he remarked.

But his employer motioned to him to remain.

"Stay right where you are," he directed. "Cap'n Rufe is one of the best friends I have, and I'm glad he came jest now."

The door opened again, and Winters ushered in a powerfully built man who seemed to be about fifty years of age. He had piercing blue eyes, a straight nose with wide nostrils, and a square jaw, about which were lines that spoke of decision and the habit of command. His face was bronzed by exposure to the weather, and his brown hair was graying at the temples. There was something open and sincere about the man that caused Drew to like him at once.

The newcomer stepped briskly forward, and Tyke met him half way, gripping his hand in the warmest kind of welcome.

"Well met, Cap'n!" cried Tyke. "I haven't seen you in a dog's age. I was jest wondering the other day what had become of you. There's nobody in the world I'd rather see. What good wind blew you to this port?"

"I'm just as glad to see you, Tyke," replied the visitor, with equal heartiness. "I've been in the

China trade for the last few years, with Frisco as my home port. You can be sure that if I'd been hailing from New York I'd have been in to see you every time I came into the harbor."

Tyke introduced Drew to the newcomer, and then the two friends settled down to an exchange of reminiscences that seemed sure to be prolonged for the rest of the afternoon.

After a while Captain Hamilton leaned back to light a cigar, and in the momentary flagging of conversation that ensued while he was getting it to going well, his gaze fell on the open chest.

"What have you got here?" he asked with a smile. "Looks like a sailor's dunnage."

"And that's jest what it is," answered Tyke, recalled to the work on which he had been engaged when the captain's coming had interrupted. "I declare! your visit put it clean out of my head. It's the box that used to belong to Manuel, that old bo'sun of mine that I guess I've told you about in some of my yarns. The one that was with me off Borneo when I lost these two fingers."

"That run-in you had with the Malays?" returned the captain. "Yes, I remember your telling me about him. Saved your life, I think you said, when one of the beggars was going to knife you."

"That's the one," confirmed Grimshaw. "He was shipwrecked later off the Horn. He left his box here with me to take care of for him."

"Seems to be pretty well broken up."

"The porter dropped it coming downstairs," explained Drew.

"You had it brought in here to save room, I suppose," said the captain. "I noticed that you were all cluttered up outside."

"Why, it wasn't that exactly," replied Tyke, slightly embarrassed. "You see, Allen an' I were rummaging around in the top loft the other day, an' among other things our eyes fell on this box. That started me off yarning about the tight places Manuel an' I had been in together, an' how he'd hinted that some day he'd be rich. Then I told Allen of how Manuel said, when he left his box with me, that there was something in it worth more'n diamonds an' then——"

"Yes, I can guess the rest," said Captain Hamilton, with a quiet smile. "And then you both got a hankering to see what was in the box."

"Allen did," admitted Tyke, 'an' I ain't denying that my fingers itched a little too. But I put it off until we had got moved into our new place. Now, didn't I, Allen?" he demanded virtuously.

Drew assented smilingly.

"Why didn't you wait then?" gibed the captain.

"We would have," affirmed Grimshaw eagerly, conscious that here at last he was on firm ground, "but that black rascal, Sam, the porter, dropped the box on his way downstairs an' it split wide open,

as you see. If I was superstitious——" here he glared challengingly at both of his listeners, who by an effort kept their faces grave, "I'd sure think it was meant that we should look into it right away. What do you say, Cap'n Rufe?"

"I agree with you," replied the captain. "The man is dead, and the box is yours by right of storage if nothing else. This Manuel didn't have wife or children that you know of, did he?"

"Nary one," responded Grimshaw. "When he'd been drinking too much he used to cry sometimes an' say that he hadn't a relative in the world to care whether he lived or died."

"That being the case, heave ahead," advised the captain. "You don't owe anything to the living or the dead to keep you from finding out all you want to know."

Reinforced by this opinion, the old man again lifted the coat from the top of the box.

What lay beneath was a curious medley of articles such as might have been gathered at various times by a sailor who was familiar with all the ports of the world. Mingled in with old trousers and boots and caps, were curiously tinted shells, clasp knives with broken blades, grotesque images of heathen gods, a tarantula and a centipede preserved in a small jar of alcohol, miraculously saved from breakage.

But what especially attracted their attention in

the midst of this miscellaneous riffraff was a small cedar box, about eight inches long by six inches wide and deep. It was heavily carved, and was secured by a lock of unusual size and strength.

"Wonder if this is the thing that was worth more'n diamonds," grunted Tyke, with a carelessness that was too elaborate not to be assumed.

"It must be that, if anything," replied Captain Hamilton, who had let his cigar go out and was now vigorously chewing the stub.

Drew said nothing, but his cheeks were flushed and his eyes brighter than usual.

Grimshaw fumbled with the lock for a moment, but found it immovable.

"Jest step out, Allen, and get all the keys we have an' we'll see if any of 'em fit," he directed.

Drew did so, and returned in a moment with the entire collection that the shop boasted. Tyke tried them all in turn, but none fitted.

"I guess there's no help for it," he said at last. "I hate to spoil the box, but we'll have to force the lock. Get a chisel, and we'll pry the thing open."

The chisel was brought and did its work promptly. There was a rasping, groaning sound, as if the box were complaining at this rude assault upon its privacy, then, with a hand that trembled a little, Tyke lifted the cover.

All three heads were close together as the men bent over and peered in. Their first glimpse brought

a sense of disappointment. They had half expected to catch the sheen of gold or the glitter of jewels. Instead they saw only a piece of oilskin that was carefully wrapped about what proved to be some sheets of paper almost as stiff as parchment.

"Huh," grunted Tyke. "Pesky lot of trouble with mighty little result. I told you I thought Manuel was a bit touched in the brain, an' I guess I was right."

"Wait a minute," said Captain Hamilton. "Don't go off at half-cock. Let's see what's in that oilskin."

Tyke opened the packet. The others drew up their chairs, one on either side, as he unfolded the oilskin carefully on his desk.

There were two sheets of paper inside, so old and mildewed that they had to be handled carefully to prevent their falling to pieces.

One of the papers seemed to be an official statement written in Spanish. The other consisted of rude tracings, moving apparently at random, with here and there a word that was almost illegible.

The three men looked at this blankly. Drew was the first to speak.

"It's a map!" he exclaimed eagerly.

CHAPTER VII

A MYSTERIOUS DOCUMENT

THE two captains scanned the document closely.

"It certainly is a map," pronounced Captain Hamilton decisively.

"That's what it 'pears to be," admitted Tyke.

"And it's the map of an island," went on Hamilton. "See," he pointed out, "these wavy lines are meant to represent water and these firmer lines stand for the land."

The others followed the movement of his finger and agreed with him.

"Well, after all, what of it?" asked Tyke, leaning back in his chair with affected indifference.

"There's this of it," said his visitor throwing his extinguished cigar into the waste-basket and drawing his chair still closer. "I feel that we have a mystery on our hands, and we should examine it fore and aft to find what there is in it."

"I s'pose the next thing you'll be saying is that's it's a guide to hidden treasure or something like that," jeered Tyke feebly, to conceal his own growing excitement.

"Stranger things than that have happened," replied the captain sententiously.

"Have it your own way," assented Tyke, rising and going to the door.

"Winters," he called, "jest remember that I'm not in to anybody for the rest of the afternoon."

"Yes, sir," replied Winters dutifully.

Having locked the door as an additional guard against intrusion, Tyke rejoined the two at the desk.

"Fire away," he directed. "What's the first move?"

"The first thing is to make out what's written on this other paper," said the captain, handling it gingerly.

The three bent over and studied the document closely.

"Why, it's some foreign lingo; Spanish probably!" exclaimed Grimshaw. "Not a word of English anywhere, as far as I can make out."

"That's so," agreed the captain, a little dismayed at the discovery. "We've struck a snag right at the start. If we have to call in any one to translate it, we'll be taking the whole world into the secret, if there is any secret worth taking about."

"Don't let that worry you," Drew intervened. "I think I know enough Spanish to be able to make out the paper."

There was an exclamation of delight from Captain Hamilton and a snort of surprise from Tyke.

"Why, I never knew that you knew anything about that lingo!" the latter ejaculated.

"I don't know any too much about it," returned Drew, modestly. "But the South American trade is getting so big now that I thought it would be a good thing to know something of Spanish; so I've been studying it at night and at odd times for the last two years."

"Well, don't that beat the Dutch!" cried Tyke delightedly. "Now if I was superstitious"—he stared truculently at the suspicious working of Drew's mouth—"I'd be sure there was something in this that wasn't natural. We want to look into the box, an' it busts open in front of us. We want to read that Spanish lingo, an' you know how to do it. I'll be keelhauled if it don't make me feel a little creepy. That is," he corrected himself quickly, "it would if I believed in them things."

"Well, now that we know you don't believe in them," said Captain Hamilton, with the faintest possible touch of sarcasm, "and since our young friend here is able to read this paper, suppose we go to it."

"You bet we'll go to it!" cried Tyke eagerly. "You jest take a pencil an' write it down in English as Allen reels it off."

"There won't be any 'reeling off'," warned Drew, as with knitted brow he pored over the document. "In the first place, the Spanish used here is very old, and some of the words that were common then aren't in use any more. I can see that. Then, too,

the ink has faded so much that some of the words can't be made out at all. And where the paper has been folded the lines have entirely crumbled away."

"Sort o' Chinese puzzle, is it? " queried Tyke dismally.

"A Spanish puzzle, anyway," smiled Drew. "I need something to help out my eyes. I wish we had some microscopes in our stock, as well as telescopes."

"We'll get the best there is in the market if necessary," declared Tyke. "But jest for the present, here is something that may fill the bill."

He reached into a drawer and brought out a reading glass that could be placed over the paper as it lay on the desk.

"The very thing!" exclaimed Drew as he applied it. "That helps a lot."

There was a tense air of expectancy over all three as he began to read. Tyke kept nervously polishing his glasses, and Captain Hamilton's hand was the least bit unsteady as it guided the pencil. Drew's voice trembled, though he tried studiously to keep it as calm as though he were reading off the items on a bill of lading in the ordinary course of business.

But if the work was exciting, it was none the less very slow. Once in a while there would be a word that was wholly outside Drew's vocabulary. In such cases the captain put it down in the original Spanish for Drew to study out later by the aid of

his dictionary. Then at the points where the story seemed most important, there would be a crease in the paper that would eliminate an entire line. Other words had faded so completely that the magnifying glass failed to help.

But at last, despite all the tantalizing breaks, the final word was reached, and the captain sat back and drew a long breath while the younger man refolded the paper.

"Well now," said Tyke, "lets have it all from the first word to the last. An' Cap'n, read mighty slow."

Amid a breathless silence, Captain Hamilton commenced reading what he had taken down.

"Trinidad, March 18, 17——.

"In the name of God, amen.

"I Ramon ..... rez unworthy sin .... fit .... name .... lips .... knowing .... mercy .... shown none, expecting .... deepest hell yet .... Mary .... saints .... shriving .... Holy Church .... confess .... life.

".... .... wild .... Tortugas .... French .... *Reine Marguerite* .... death.

From there we ran to Port au Spain .... plundering .... city, ... many men and boys and .... women and ..... Off one of Baha .... Cays .... galleon .... fought stoutly .... walk .... plank. Other ships .... forgotten. We took great spoils .... accursed .... spent .... living.

"I .... captain. Down in the Caribbean Sea we .... caravel .... one hundred and twenty. Lost ship in tornado .... got another.

"Many more .... weary .... telling we .... God .... man.

"At last .... ten .... butchery ....frigates .... ch ..... Fled to one of the .... islands .... careened. Tired knowing .... sooner or later I made up my mind .... one more rich prize .... wickedness.

"We captured the .... Guadalquiver. .... Desperate .... blood. .... thousand doubloons .... pearls .... price.

"I knew of an island off the beaten track where there was good hiding .... found. night. Cutter .... ashore. mutiny .... killed

them both. And there the booty is still .... forbid.

"Now standing .... hell. I have made .... drawing .... island where .... buried. I give it freely .... Mother .... cand .... altar and .... masses .... unworthy soul.

his
(X) *Al* ....
mark

"Attest *Pablo Ximenes,* notary."

The captain laid the paper on the desk and glanced at the intent faces of his companions.

"Now, what do you make of that?" he asked.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SCOURGES OF THE SEA

Tyke's eyes were staring and his face was so apoplectic that Drew was alarmed.

"Make out of it?" Tyke spluttered, getting up and nearly overturning his chair. "I make out of it that Manuel was right when he said that the old chest held something worth more'n diamonds."

Grimshaw was so shaken out of his usual calm that Captain Hamilton, too, shared Drew's alarm.

"I tell you what we'd better do," he suggested. "We're all too much excited to discuss this thing intelligently now. We've got a whole lot to digest, and it will take time. This thing will keep. Suppose we have our young friend here take this rough draft home with him and piece out the missing parts as well as he can. In the meantime we'll all mull it over in our minds, look at it from every angle, and meet here fresh and rested to-morrow morning to decide on what we'd better do."

"I guess you're right," assented Tyke, mopping his forehead. "This old head of mine is whirling around like a top."

Tyke locked the map carefully in his safe and committed the other paper and the captain's partial transcription to his chief clerk with solemn injunctions to take the utmost care of them.

But the latter stood in no need of the admonition. He would have defended those papers with his life. They meant for him—what did they not mean?

Romance, adventure, wealth! Now at last he would have something to justify his search for Ruth Adams and his suit for her hand. Now he could frame his jewel, when he found it, in a proper setting.

The three men prepared to leave the private office. Captain Hamilton was first at the door, and he unlocked it. The instant he pulled the door open, Drew heard him ejaculate:

"Thunderation! Mr. Ditty! What are you doing here?"

"You told me to follow you here, Captain Hamilton," said a respectful voice. "They told me you were inside, and so I waited for you."

"Humph! quite right, Mr. Ditty," Captain Hamilton said hastily. Then he thrust his head back into the office. "My mate's come for me, Tyke. We've got an errand on Whitehall Street. See you tomorrow. Good night, Mr. Drew."

Both the captain and the other man had gone when Drew went out into the larger room. The remainder of that afternoon he spent in a dream.

When the day's work was over, Drew dined hastily and then shut himself in his room where he worked busily until midnight, filling in the vacant spaces in the rough draft of the confession. He was

critical of his efforts, recasting and revising again and again until he was satisfied that he had caught the full meaning of the old document as far as it was humanly possible. Only then did he lay it aside—to dream of Ruth.

Drew was at the shop before his usual time the next morning, and Tyke and Captain Hamilton came in soon afterward. The three went at once into secret session, leaving the entire conduct of the chandlery business to Winters, much to the mystification of that youth.

All three were fresh and cool this morning as they buckled down to the problem they had to solve, and the wisdom of the previous night's adjournment was clearly evident.

"I got to talking this thing over with my daughter last night," said Captain Hamilton. "You'd forgotten I had a daugher, Tyke? Wait till you see her! Well, she was aboard the schooner for dinner with me, and she said: 'Daddy, if there is a real pirate's treasure, please go after it. Then you can stay ashore and not go sailing away from me any more.' So, I've a double incentive for pursuing this thing," and the captain laughed.

"Yes, that's like the women-folk," observed Grimshaw. "They're always for a man's leaving the sea."

"That isn't what made you leave it Tyke," Captain Hamilton said slyly.

"An' it won't be women-folk that sends me back to it, neither," growled the older man. "An' now, Allen," he added, as they settled comfortably into their chairs, "how did you git along with the paper? Have you got it so that it makes sense?"

"I'll let you judge of that for yourselves," replied Drew, taking the revised draft from his pocket. "Of course, I can't say that it's exactly right. Some of the missing words and sentences I had to guess at. But it's as nearly right as I know how to make it."

He waited while Grimshaw and Captain Hamilton lighted their cigars, and then proceeded to read:

"Trinidad, March 18, 17.....

"In the name of God, amen.

"I, Ramon Alvarez, unworthy sinner that I am and not fit to take the name of God upon my lips, and well knowing that I deserve no mercy who have ever shown none, expecting to be plunged into the deepest hell, yet basing my only hope on the Virgin Mary and the blessed saints and the shriving of Holy Church, do hereby confess the misdeeds of my life.

"From my youth up I was wild. I was with the buccaneers who, off the Tortugas, captured the French ship, *Reine Marguerite,* all of whose crew and passengers we put to death. From there we ran to Port au Spain, ravaging and plundering. We

captured the city, killing most of the men and boys and carrying off the women and girls. Off one of the Bahama Cays we took a Spanish galleon, and although her people fought stoutly, we made them finally walk the pank. Other ships we captured whose names I have forgotten. We took great spoils, but the money was accursed and was soon spent in wild living.

"I myself soon became a captain. Down in the Caribbean Sea we won a caravel and killed all on board, one hundred and twenty. I lost my ship in a tornado, but soon got another.

"Many more evil deeds we did that would make me weary with the telling. We feared neither God nor man.

"At last, after ten years or more of butchery, the nations sent many frigates in chase of us. I fled to one of the islands and careened my ship. Tired, knowing I would be taken sooner or later, I made up my mind that I would capture one more rich prize and then be done with my wickedness.

"We captured the ship *Guadalquivir*. The fight was desperate and the decks ran with blood. We took ..... thousand doubloons, many pearls and jewels of price.

"I knew of an island off the beaten track where there was good hiding to be found. I took the cutter one night and went ashore to bury treasure. Two men with me mutinied and I killed them both.

And there the booty is still, unless it has been taken away, which God forbid.

"Now, standing mayhap on the very brink of hell, I have made this drawing of the island where the treasure is buried. I give it freely to Holy Mother Church, and beg that part be spent for candles to be burned before the altar and for masses to be said for my unworthy soul.

his
"Ramon (X) ***Alvarez.***
mark

"Attest, *Pablo Ximenes,* notary."

"Good work, Allen," commended Tyke, as the reader stopped.

"Very cleverly done," added Captain Hamilton.

Drew flushed with pleasure.

"Those old fellows were well called 'the scourges of the sea,' weren't they?" he said. "Now here! There are just two things missing that it would be the merest guess-work to supply," he added. "One is the date. We know the century, but the year is absolutely rubbed out. The other is the number of doubloons captured with his last prize. That was in a crease of the paper and had crumbled away."

"Yes," replied Captain Hamilton; "but neither is so very important. Of course, the later the date, the less time there has been for any one to find the doubloons and take them away. We have the names

of some of the ships that were captured though, and we might look the matter up in some French or Spanish history and so get a clue to the date.

"As to the extent of the treasure, we'll find that out for ourselves when we get it, if we ever do. And if we don't get it, the amount doesn't matter."

"It seems to be a pretty good-sized one, from the way the rascal speaks about it," remarked Tyke.

"Plenty big enough to pay for the trouble of getting it," agreed Captain Hamilton.

"Well, now that we know what the paper says, let's git right down to brass tacks," suggested Grimshaw. "In the first place, this particular pirate, Alvarez, was evidently a Spaniard. The language the paper is written in proves that."

"Not necessarily," objected the captain. "Spanish is the language spoken in Trinidad, and even if the dying man were a Frenchman or an Englishman, the notary would probably translate what he said into Spanish. Still, the first name, and probably the last, indicate Spanish birth. I guess we're pretty safe in considering that point settled."

"But I thought most of the pirates, the leaders anyway, were French or English," persisted Tyke.

"So they were," answered the captain; "but the Portuguese and Spaniards ran them a close second. As a matter of fact, those fellows acknowledged no nationality and cut the throats of their own countrymen as readily as any others. The only flag they

owed any allegiance to was the skull and cross-bones."

"But how comes it that this confession was made before a notary?" asked Drew. "I should think it would have been made verbally to a priest."

"Well," said the captain thoughtfully, "there are various ways of accounting for that. Alvarez may have been taken sick suddenly, and the notary may have been nearest at hand. Even if the priest had been summoned, the sick man might have feared that he would die before the priest got there and wanted to get it off his mind. He didn't seem to have much hope of heaven, from the way the paper reads."

"I don't wonder," put in Tyke, dryly.

"But whatever chance there was, he wanted to take it," finished the captain.

"I wonder how the paper ever got into Manuel's hands," pondered Tyke.

"The churches and convents seemed to suffer most in those wild days," said the captain. "They were sacked and plundered again and again. It might very well be that this paper was stolen by ignorant adventurers, and in some way got into the hands of one of Manuel's ancestors and so came down to him. Probably most of them couldn't read and had no idea of what the paper contained. Could Manuel read?" he asked, turning to Grimshaw.

"Why, yes; but rather poorly," answered Tyke.

"I've seen him sometimes in port looking over a Spanish newspaper, moving his finger slowly along each line."

"That explains it then," said the captain. "He was able to make out just enough to guess that the paper and map referred to hidden treasure, but he wasn't able to make good sense of it."

"I s'pose that was the reason he was always trying to git me interested in his pirate stories," put in Tyke. "He was kind o' feeling me out, an' if I'd showed any interest or belief in it, he'd have probably tried to git me to take a ship and go after it with him."

"Not a doubt in the world," agreed Captain Hamilton.

"Well, now we've looked at the matter of the paper from most every side," remarked Tyke; "an' I guess we're all agreed that it looks like a *bona fide* confession. We've seen, too, how it was possible for it to git into the hands of Manuel. Now let's see if we can make head or tail of the map."

He brought out the paper from his safe and the three men crowded around it. Here, after all, was the crux of the whole matter. By this they were to stand or fall. It booted little to know merely that the doubloons were buried somewhere in the West Indies. They might as well be at the North Pole, unless they could locate their hiding place with some degree of precision.

The dark, heavily shaded part in the center of the map was evidently meant to mark the position of the island itself. Quite as surely, the light, undulating lines surrounding it were intended to show the water.

"There seems to be just one inlet," said Captain Hamilton, pointing to an indentation that bit deeply into the dark mass of the island.

"Lucky there's even one," grunted Tyke. "I've known many of those picayune islands where there was no safe anchorage at all."

The island was irregular in shape and seemed to have an elevation in the center. But what most attracted their attenion were three small circles some distance in from the shore that seemed to indicate some special spot.

"There's some writing alongside of these," announced Drew, after a sharp scrutiny. "If you'll hand me the reading glass I think I can make it out."

The glass was quickly brought into use, and Drew stared at the writing hard and long.

" 'The Witch's Head.' 'The Three Sisters'," he translated.

"Sounds like a suffragette colony," muttered Tyke.

But Drew was too deeply engrossed with his task to notice the play of fancy.

" 'Thirty-seven long paces due north from the

Witch's Head.' 'Eighty-nine long paces due east from The Three Sisters,' " he went on.

"Now we're getting down to something definite!" exclaimed Captain Hamilton.

"That's all," announced Drew. "What do you suppose it means?"

"It can mean only one thing, it seems to me," said Tyke excitedly. "It's pointing to the spot where the doubloons are buried."

"Yes," agreed the captain, "I should take it to mean that if you mark off thirty-seven long paces north from the Witch's Head and eighty-nine long paces east from The Three Sisters, the spot where those paths cross would be the place to dig."

"Do you see anything on the map that would give a hint as to the latitude and logitude?" asked Grimshaw anxiously.

"No," answered Drew. "Wait a minute though," he added hastily. "Here's something that looks like figures down in the lower left hand corner. Fifty-seven .... No! Sixty-seven-three is one, and thirteen-ten is the other."

"That can only stand for longitude and latitude!" cried Tyke. "Quick, Allen, git down that Hydrographic Office chart. That'll cover it."

CHAPTER IX

GETTING DOWN TO "BRASS TACKS"

In a moment the chart was taken down from its hook and spread out on Tyke's big desk. With shaking fingers the old man found the line of longitude indicated on the pirate's map, and followed it down till he came to the thirteenth degree of latitude.

"Thirteen-ten; sixty-seven-three," he muttered. "Thirteen degrees, ten minutes latitude; sixty-seven degrees, three minutes longitude. There is is!" and he made a mark with his pencil on the chart. "Right down there in the Caribbean, west of Martinique. Glory Hallelujah!"

The old man was as frisky as a colt, and under the stimulus of excitement the years seemed to drop away from him.

Captain Hamilton was quite as delighted, though he did not give so free a rein to his emotions.

"Splendid!" he beamed. "When we can actually get down to figures, it begins to look like business. Of course, there are innumerable small islands down that way. But it won't take much cruising around to try them all."

Once more he studied the shape and the size of the island, and his brows knitted almost to a scowl, so close was his concentration.

"That elevation in the middle looks something like a whale's hump," remarked Drew.

Captain Hamilton jumped as though he had been shot.

"That's it!" he cried. "By Jove! I know that island! I remember thinking that very thing about it one day some years ago when I was coming up from Maracaibo. My mate was standing by me at the time. It was just as sunset, and the island stood out plain against the sky. I remember saying to him that it looked to me just like the hump of a whale. Now we've located it sure. I'll recognize it the minute my eyes fall on it whether it's charted or not. My boy, you're a wonder. You've helped us out at every turn in this business."

"That he has," declared Tyke enthusiastically. "Neither the paper nor the map would have been any good without Allen to translate 'em. I'm proud of you, Allen."

The young man flushed with pleasure and murmured deprecatingly that it was just a bit of luck that he happened to know Spanish.

"Luck! 'Tisn't luck that makes a man dig out a foreign lingo," said Tyke. "An', anyway, you've been smart at every point with your suggestions, an' helped us out as we went along. You started things with your eagerness to look into Manuel's box an' you put the cap sheaf on when you jest now gave Cap'n Rufe that last pointer.

"An' now," Tyke went on, when they had sobered down a little, "let's get down to brass tacks. There's jest one thing that remains to be done, but it's a mighty big thing. We feel pretty sure that there is a treasure, an' we think we know where that treasure is. Now the question is, how are we going to git it?"

Drew experienced a feeling of dismay. He had been so engrossed with the preliminary work that he had hardly given a thought to the practical problem involved. He had taken it for granted that it would be easy enough to get a ship to go after the pirate's hoard.

Now with Tyke's bald statement confronting him, a host of perplexities sprang up to torment him. Where were they to get the right kind of ship? How could they escape telling the captain of that ship just where they were going and what they were going for?

But if the matter puzzled Tyke and his chief clerk, it bothered Captain Hamilton not at all. He lighted a fresh cigar, crossed his legs and smiled broadly.

"That's an easy one," he remarked. "Give me something hard."

Tyke looked at him in some surprise and Drew's face reflected his bewilderment.

"Seems to me it's hard enough," grumbled Tyke.

"What do you mean?" asked Drew quickly.

"I mean," said the captain complacently, "that we'll make this voyage in my schooner."

The two others jumped to their feet.

"Splendid!" cried Drew.

"Glory be!" ejaculated Tyke.

"The plan seems to suit you," smiled the captain.

"Suit us!" shouted Tyke. "Why, it's jest made to order. But how're you going to git the owner's permission? How do you know he'll be willing to have the ship chartered for such a cruise? An' how are we going to keep the secret from him?"

"As I happen to be the chief owner, as well as the captain, I guess we won't have any trouble on that score."

"Owner!" exclaimed Tyke, in astonishment. "I hadn't any idee that you had any int'rest in her outside of your berth as captain. You've been pretty forehanded to have got so far ahead as to own a craft like that."

"I haven't done so badly in the last few years," said the captain modestly; "and as fast as I saved money I kept buying more stock in the old girl. Mr. Parmalee encouraged that idea in his captains. He knew human nature, and knew that when a man's own money was invested in the deck under him he was going to be mighty careful of the ship's safety and would have a personal interest in seeing that she was a money maker. The old man's dead now, but his son has inherited a third interest in

the *Bertha Hamilton,* while I hold the other two-thirds. I renamed her when I got control of the bonny craft. I hope some day to buy out Parmalee's share and become the sole owner."

"You're a lucky man," congratulated Tyke warmly. "It must be great when you tread the plank to feel that you're not only boss for the time being, but that you actually own her. What is she like? How big is she? And how much of a crew do you ship?"

"She's three stick, schooner rigged," replied the captain. "A hundred and fifty feet over all and carries a crew of about thirty. Oh! she's a sailing craft, Tyke. She's not afoul with steam winches and the like. And she's a beauty," he added, his eyes kindling with pride. "There are mighty few ships on this coast that she can't show a pair of heels to, and she's a sweet sailer in any weather. She stands right up into the wind's eye as steady as a church and when it comes to reaching or running free, I'd back her against anything that carries sails."

"But how about your other engagements?" suggested Grimshaw. "Is she chartered for a voyage anywhere soon?"

"That's another rare bit of luck," returned the captain. "I had an engagement to-day with Hollings & Company, who were thinking of having me take a cargo for Galveston. If I hadn't run plump

into this treasure business as I did, there isn't any doubt but I would have closed with them to-day. But now it's all off. I'll see them this afternoon and tell them they'll have to get somebody else."

Tyke sat down heavily in his chair and wagged his grizzled head solemnly.

"It's beyond me," he said. "It must be meant. Here we might be weeks or months before we could git a ship that suited us, if we got it at all; but along comes Cap'n Rufe here with the very thing we want. If I was superstitious,"—before his stony stare they sat unwinking—"I'd think for sure there was something in this more'n natural. It can't be, after all this, that we're going on a wild goose chase."

"Well," replied Captain Hamilton cautiously, "it may be that after all. Things certainly have worked to a charm so far, but that doesn't prove anything. 'There's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,' and this may be one of them. When all is said and done, it's a gamble. For all we know, the doubloons may have been taken away a hundred years ago, and all we'll find after we get there may be an empty hole in the ground. But 'nothing venture, nothing have'; and with all the evidence we have, I'm willing to take a chance."

"So am I!" cried Tyke heartily. "Of course, we stand to lose a tidy little sum if it should turn out

to be a fluke. There's the outfitting to be done, the crew's wages to be paid, an' a lot of other expenses that'll mount up into money. But it's worth a chance, and if we lose I'm willing to stand the gaff without whining."

It goes without saying that Drew heartily echoed these sentiments in his mind, but he felt some delicacy about expressing them. After all, it was Captain Hamilton and his employer who would have to provide the funds for the expedition and stand the loss if there were any. He himself would be called on to risk nothing.

And with this thought came another with the suddenness of a stab. On what was he building his hopes for a share in the profits of the adventure? After all, he was only Tyke's employee. The very time he was spending in unraveling this mystery belonged to Tyke and was paid for by him. He felt again the weight of his chains, and the air castle he had built for Ruth's occupancy suddenly took on the iridescent colors of a bubble.

"Well, now that we've got down to brass tacks as you say, Tyke, let's get along to the next point" said the captain briskly. "I don't suppose you could come along with me?"

"You don't!" snorted Tyke. "Well then, you're due for another guess. You bet your binoculars I'm coming along. I'd like to see anything that would stop me!"

Drew's heart sank. If Tyke were going, that would mean that he would have to stay behind to look after the interests of the chandlery shop.

"But your business?" objected the captain.

"Business be hanged!" roared Tyke. "It can go to Davy Jones, for all I care. Anyway, I can leave it in good hands. But I'm going to have one more sight of blue water before I turn up my toes for good, no matter what happens. An' I'm going to take Allen along with me!"

Drew was struck dumb for the moment and could only stare at the excited old man.

"Yes!" repeated Tyke, "he's going to have his fling along with the rest of us. We ought to be back in a couple of months, if we have any kind of luck. Winters is a bright boy, and he can keep things going for a while."

"That'll be fine," said the captain with enthusiasm. "I'd like nothing better than to have the two of you for messmates."

"But say!" broke in Tyke, as a thought suddenly occurred to him, "what about that feller—Parmalee—who has a third int'rest in your craft? Of course, he'll want to know, an' he'll have a right to know, why you don't take this Galveston cargo an' why you're going on this cruise of ours. How are you going to git around that?"

"That is something of a problem," the captain replied slowly, "and especially as he thought of going

with me to Galveston for the sake of his health. He's lame and delicate, and the doctor told him that a sea voyage was just what he needed to build him up.

"Of course," he went on, "I'm the principal owner of the ship, and what I say, goes. I could do this against his will, if I wished, although of course in that case I'd be bound to see that he got as much profit as he would have done if I'd taken the Galveston job."

"What kind of feller is this Parmalee?" asked Grimshaw cautiously.

"As fine a lad as you'd care to meet," answered the captain heartily. "Friendly and good-hearted and white all through. He's sickly in body, but his head's all right. And just because he is that kind, I don't want to do anything that would hurt or offend him.

"But that's a matter that can wait," he continued. "In any event it won't affect our plans. Either I'll fix the matter up with him satisfactorily in a money way, or, if you think best, we'll let him into the secret and take him along."

"Would that be safe?" inquired Tyke dubiously.

"Absolutely," affirmed the captain. "He's a man of honor, and if he promised to keep our secret, wild horses couldn't drag it from him. I'd trust him as I would myself. Maybe he'd like to come along with us. He's too rich to care anything about

the doubloons, but he's romantic, and he might like the fun of hunting for it."

"Well," said Tyke, "we'll have to leave that matter to you to settle as you think best. Any one you vouch for will be good enough for me."

"And now," said Captain Hamilton, "there's one thing more that we haven't touched on yet. I suppose we understand, Tyke, that you and I put up the expenses of this expedition, fifty-fifty?"

"Sure thing," agreed Tyke.

"And if nothing comes of it, we simply charge it up to profit and loss——"

"An' let it go at that," finished Tyke. "We'll have had a run for our money, anyhow."

"On the other hand," the captain continued, "if we find the treasure, and it proves to be of any size, we'll first deduct the cost of the trip, lay aside enough for Parmalee to make things right with him —he may not want it, but we'll make him take it— and then divide what's left into three equal shares?"

"Three!" Drew uttered the ejaculation, and the blood drummed in his temples.

"That's right," assented Tyke placidly. "One for you, one for me, and the third for Allen."

CHAPTER X

CAPRICIOUS FORTUNE

Drew experienced a thrill of delight. But he felt that he ought to protest.

"I'm not putting up anything toward the expense," he said. "If things go wrong, you'll lose heavily. I have nothing to lose and everything to gain. It doesn't seem the square thing."

"Let us do the worrying about that," smiled the captain. "You've done your fair share already toward this adventure. We'll all share and share alike."

"You bet we will," chimed in Tyke. "There wouldn't be any cruise at all if it hadn't been for you. Who suggested searching the box? Who translated the paper and the map? You've been the head and front of the whole thing from the beginning."

"But——" began Drew.

"'But,' nothing," interrupted Tyke. "Not another word. Remember I'm your boss."

And Drew, glad enough for once in his life to be bossed, became silent. But the walls of his air castle began to grow more solid.

"How long will it be before you can have the schooner ready to sail?" Tyke inquired, turning to the captain.

"Oh, in a week or ten days if we are pressed," was the response. "It won't take us more than that to get our supplies aboard and ship our crew."

"The crew is an important matter," reflected Tyke. "It won't do to pick up any riffraff that may come to hand. We want to git men that we can trust. Sailors have a way of smelling out the meaning of any cruise that is out of the usual order of things, an' if there's any trouble-makers in the crew who git a hint that we're out for treasure, they'll cause mischief."

"They won't get any hint, unless some of us talk in our sleep," replied the captain. "I know where I can lay hands on quite a few of my old crew, but I'll be so busy with other things that I'll have to leave the picking of most of the men to Ditty."

"Ditty?" said Grimshaw inquiringly.

"He's my mate," explained the captain. "Cal Ditty. As smart a sailor as one could ask for. But that about lets him out."

"Why! don't you like him?" asked Tyke quickly.

"No, I can't say I do," replied the captain slowly. "I've never warmed toward the man. There's something about him that repels me."

"Why don't you git rid of him then?"

"Well, you see it's like this," explained Captain Hamilton. "He saved Mr. Parmalee's life one time when the old man fell overboard, and naturally Parmalee felt very grateful to him. He promised

him that he should always have a berth on one of his ships as long as he lived. Of course, since the old man is dead, we could do as we liked about firing Ditty, but young Parmalee feels that it's up to him to respect his father's wishes. So rather than have any trouble about it, I've kept Ditty on. But he's a lush when he's ashore, and I don't fully trust him. That may be unjust too, for he's always done his work well and I've had no reason to complain."

"Well, anyway," warned Tyke, "I'd keep my weather eye peeled if I was you. When you feel that way about a man, there's usually something to justify it sooner or later."

"Well, now, suppose I'm ready in a fortnight, how about you?" asked Captain Hamilton.

"Oh, we'll be ready by that time," replied Tyke confidently. "Of course we've got this moving to do, but we're pretty well packed up now, an' before a week is over we'll have everything shipshape in our new quarters."

"We'll race each other to see who'll be ready first," laughed Captain Hamilton. "In the meantime, if you're not too rushed, come over and take a squint at the *Bertha Hamilton.* And if you don't see the niftiest little craft that ever gladdened the eyes of a sailorman, you can call me a swab."

"Where is she lying?" asked Drew.

"Foot of Franklin Street, North River. You'll

find me there most all the time, but if you don't just go aboard and look her over anyway. You'll be on her for some weeks, and you might as well get acquainted."

Tyke and Drew promised that they would, and, with a cordial handshake, Captain Hamilton left the office.

Grimshaw carefully stowed the map and paper away in his safe, and then turned to Drew.

"Named his craft after the daughter he spoke of, I reckon—*Bertha Hamilton.* Well, perhaps it'll bring us luck. Cap'n Rufe is some seaman, an' no mistake." Then he added, with a quizzical smile: "Quite a lot's happened since this time yesterday."

"I should say there had!" responded Drew. "My head is swimming with it. It'll take some time for me to settle down and get my bearings. I'm tempted to pinch myself to see if I'm not dreaming. If I am, I don't want to wake up. You're certainly good to me, Mr. Grimshaw," he added warmly.

Tyke waved aside Drew's thanks by a motion of his hand.

"Everything does seem topsy-turvy," he said. "I thought that the old hulk was laid up for good. But now it seems she's clearing for one more cruise. An' it's all come about so queer like. Now if I——"

Tyke checked himself and rose to his feet.

"Well, now we've got one more reason for hustling," he declared. "You'll have your hands full

from this time on, my boy, an' so will I. You want to begin to break Winters in right away, so that he'll be able to take charge of things while we're gone."

"How shall I explain it?" asked Drew. "What shall I give as a reason for the trip?"

Tyke reflected for a moment.

"Jest say that we're going for a cruise in Southern waters with an old sea cap'n friend of mine. Tell him that you've been sticking pretty close to your desk, an' that I thought it would be a good thing for you to go along. Don't make any mystery of it. Tell him that we'll be back in a couple of months, an' that it's up to him to make good while we're gone.

"One thing more," he added, as Drew turned to go. "Tell him that I'm going to raise his salary, an' he'll feel so good about that that he won't waste much time thinking about us and our plans."

The recipe worked as Tyke had predicted, and after the first expressions of surprise, Winters speedly became engrossed in his added responsibilities and the increase in his pay, leaving Drew untroubled by prying questions.

For the next three days all worked like beavers, and by nightfall of the third day the moving had been effected and the stock arranged in their new quarters.

"Guess we're going to be ready for that cruise

before Cap'n Rufe is," grinned Tyke, as he surveyed the finished work.

But he exulted too soon. That very evening, Drew received a telephone message from St. Luke's hospital saying that Mr. T. Grimshaw had been brought in there with an injured leg as the result of a street accident. He had requested that Drew be summoned at once.

Shocked and grieved, the young man hurried to the hospital. He was ushered at once into the private room in which Tyke was lying.

The leg had been bandaged, and Tyke had recovered somewhat from the first shock of the accident. He was suffering no special pain at the moment, and was eagerly watching the door through which Drew would come.

The latter's heart ached as he saw how wan and gray the old man's face looked. But his indomitable spirit still shone in his sunken eyes, and he tried to summon a cheery smile as Drew came near the bed.

"Well, Allen, my boy," he remarked, "I guess I crowed too soon this afternoon. I didn't think then that the old hulk would be laid up so soon for repairs."

Drew expressed his sorrow, as he gripped Tyke's hand affectionately.

"How did it happen?" he asked.

"Cruising across the street in front of an auto,"

replied Tyke. "Thought I had cleared it, but guess I hadn't. I saw that one-eyed feller standing there——"

"What one-eyed fellow?" Drew asked, interrupting.

"Why, I don't know who he was. Looked like a sea-faring man," returned Tyke. "Oh! That does hurt! Doctor said it would if I moved it."

"Don't move your leg, then," advised Drew. "What about the one-eyed man?"

"Why," repeated Tyke, reflectively, "I saw him on the curb jest as I jumped to git out of the way of that auto. I ain't as spry as I used to be I admit; but seems to me I would have made it all right if it hadn't been for that feller."

"What did he do to you?" asked the anxious Drew. Of course, there was more than one sailor in the world with only one eye; yet the young man wondered.

"I saw his hand stretched out, an' I thought he was going to grab me. But next I knew I was pushed right back an' the car knocked me flat. B'fore I lost my senses, it seemed to me that that one-eyed swab was down on his knees going through my pockets."

"Robbing you?" gasped Drew.

"Well—mebbe I dreamed it. I've been puzzling over it ever since I've been lying here. I didn't lose my watch, nor yet my wallet, that's sure," and

Tyke grinned. "But it certainly was a queer experience. An' I'd like to know who that one-eyed feller is."

"How badly is your leg hurt?" asked Drew.

"Might have been worse," answered Tyke. "Doctor says my knee's wrenched an' the ligaments torn, but there's nothing that can't be mended. I'll be off my pins for the next month or two, they say. So I guess old Tyke won't be Johnny-on-the-spot when you dig up them doubloons."

"Don't worry about that," protested Drew. "The only important thing now is that you should get well. The treasure can wait. We'll postpone the trip until you get ready to go."

"No you won't!" declared Tyke energetically. "You'll do nothing of the kind! You'll go right ahead and look for it, an' I'll lie here an' root for you."

He was getting excited, and at this juncture the nurse interposed and Drew had to go, after promising to come again the first thing in the morning.

He sent a message on leaving the hospital to Captain Hamilton, and the next morning they went in company to visit the patient.

They were delighted to learn that he was doing well. There were no complications, and it was only a matter of time before the injured leg would be as well as ever.

The captain had been grieved to hear of his old

friend's mishap. He expressed his entire willingness to postpone the trip till some time in the future when Tyke could go along. But the latter had been thinking the matter over and was even more determined than he had been the night before that his injury should not prevent the expedition going forward as planned.

"One man more or less don't make any difference," he declared. "Of course, I'd set my heart on going with you, an' I ain't denying it's a sore disappointment to have to lie here like some old derelict. But it would worry me a good deal more to know that I was knocking the whole plan to flinders. Our agreement still stands, except that I'll have to be a silent partner instead of an active one. Allen can represent me, as well as himself, when you git to the island. But I can do my part in outfitting the expedition as well as though I was on my feet. My leg is out of commission, but my arm isn't, an' I can still sign checks," and he chuckled. "You fellers go right ahead now and git busy."

There was no swerving him from his determination, and, although reluctantly, they were forced to acquiesce. The captain went ahead with his preparations, and Drew redoubled his activities, as now he had to do two men's work. But his superb vitality laughed at work and he became so engrossed in it that he forgot everything else.

Except Ruth Adams!

Consciously or sub-consciously, her gracious memory was with him always.

In the first rush of exultation that he felt when he found himself admitted as an equal partner in the possible gains of the expedition, he had overlooked the fact that it meant an absence, more or less prolonged, from the city where he supposed Ruth Adams to be. How many things might happen in the interval! Suppose in his absence some fortunate man should woo and win her? A girl so attractive could not fail to have suitors. He felt that the golden fruit he might get on the expedition would turn to ashes if he could not lay it at her feet.

So, tossed about by a sea of alternate hopes and fears, the days went by until but forty-eight hours remained before the time agreed upon for sailing.

On Tuesday, Allen had occasion to confer with Captain Hamilton. Up to now, their meetings, when it had been necessary to see each other on business connected with the trip, had been in the South Street office. And, what with the multiplied demands on his time and his daily calls on Tyke at the hospital, Drew had not yet visited the *Bertha Hamilton.* He had planned to do so more than once, but had found it out of the question. He told himself that he would have ample time to get acquainted with the schooner from stem to stern when

they had left New York behind them and were heading for the island in the Caribbean.

But to-day the conference was to be aboard the *Bertha Hamilton.* Drew was forced to confess, on reaching the pier at which the schooner was moored and on catching his first glimpse of her, that the captain was justified in his enthusiasm. She was indeed a beauty. With her long, graceful, gently curving lines, she seemed more like a yacht than a merchant vessel. She was schooner rigged, and, although of course the sails were furled, the height of her masts indicated great sail-carrying capacity. Everything about her suggested grace and speed, and Drew did not doubt that she could show her heels to almost any sailing craft in the port.

As his appreciative eyes swept the vessel throughout its entire length from stern rail to bowsprit, his admiration grew. He was glad that such a craft was to carry the hopes and fortunes of the treasure hunters. She seemed to promise success in advance.

He went over the plank and turned to go aft in search of the captain. Then he stopped suddenly. His heart seemed to cease beating for an instant. He found himself looking into the hazel eyes of the girl of whom he had been dreaming day and night since he had first seen her down on the East River docks!

CHAPTER XI

A DREAM REALIZED

For a moment Drew almost doubted his own eyesight. But there was no mistake. There could be only one girl like her in the world, he told himself. She was wearing a simple white dress and her head was bare. The bright sunshine rioted in her golden hair, and her eyes were luminous and soft. A wave of color mounted to her forehead as she came face to face with Allen Drew.

She had turned the corner of the deck house, and they had almost collided. She stepped back, startled, and Drew collected his scattered wits sufficiently to lift his hat and apologize.

"I—I beg your pardon," he stammered. "I ought to have been more careful."

"Oh, it was my fault entirely," she answered graciously. "I shouldn't have turned the corner so sharply."

What next he might have said Drew never knew, for just then there came a heavy step and the sound of a jovial voice behind him, and Captain Hamilton's hand was grasping his.

"So you did manage to come over and get a look at the beauty, did you? What do you think of her?"

"The most beautiful thing I've ever seen!" answered Drew fervently.

He might have had a different beauty in mind from that which the captain had, and perhaps this suspicion occurred to the girl, for the flush in her cheek became slightly more pronounced. But the unsuspecting captain was hugely gratified at the tribute, though somewhat surprise at its ardor.

A glance from the girl reminded the captain of a duty he had overlooked.

"I was forgetting that you two hadn't met," he said. "Drew, this is my daughter, Miss Hamilton. Ruth, this is Mr. Allen Drew, the young man I've been telling you so much about lately."

They acknowledged the introduction and for one fleeting, delicious moment her soft hand rested in his.

So she was Captain Hamilton's daughter! Her name was not Adams! What a blind trail he had been following!

But Drew's thoughts were interrupted by the girl's voice.

"We have met before, Daddy," Ruth said with a smile. "Don't you remember my telling you about the young man who came to my aid that day when I went on an errand for you to the *Normandy?* You remember—the day I dropped the letters over the side? That was Mr. Drew."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the captain. "And

here we've been seeing each other every day or so and I've never thanked him. Drew, consider yourself thanked by a grateful father."

They all laughed, and then the captain put his hand on the young man's shoulder.

"Come into the cabin and let's get that business settled. You'll excuse us, won't you, Ruth?" he added, turning to his daughter. "We've got a hundred things to do yet, and we can't afford to lose a minute."

Ruth similingly assented, and Drew was dragged off, raging internally, his only comfort being the glance she gave him beneath her lowered eyelids.

He tried to listen intelligently to the captain's talk and give coherent answers to his questions. But bind himself down as he would, his mind and heart were in the wildest commotion.

So she was Captain Hamilton's daughter! Her name was not Adams! The thought kept repeating itself.

But he had found her now, he wildly exulted. The search that might have taken years—that even then might not have found her—had come to an end. He had been formally introduced to her. He need no longer worship from afar. Her father was his friend. He could see her, talk to her, listen to her, woo her, and at last win her. Poor fellow! he was so hard hit he scarcely knew how to conduct himself.

"As I was saying," he heard the captain remarking in a voice that seemed to be coming from a great distance, "young Parmalee has finally made up his mind to come with us. His doctor insists that the one thing he needs just now is a sea voyage. Not the kind that he might get on an ocean steamer, with its formality and heavy meals and chattering crowds, but the kind you can get nowhere but on a sailing craft."

"I suppose you had to tell him just what we were going down there to look for?" Drew forced himself to say.

"Yes, I did, after putting him on his word of honor never to breathe a word about the object of the cruise to anybody. I'd as lief have his word as any one's else bond."

"What did he think about our chances in such an enterprise?"

"Now, there's a thing that rather surprised me," replied the captain. "To tell the truth, I felt a little sheepish about mentioning the doubloons to him, for I rather expected him to laugh. But he took it in dead earnest, and honestly thinks we have a chance."

"Is he perfectly willing, as far as his interest in the schooner goes, that she shall be used for this purpose?" Drew queried.

"Perfectly. In fact, he was enthusiastic about it. Wouldn't even hear of any compensation for

the use of the vessel. Said he expected to get his money's worth in the fun he'd have."

"He seems to have a sportsmanlike spirit, all right," commented Drew, with a smile.

"He surely has," confirmed the captain. "I think you'll like him when you come to know him."

"How old is he?"

"About your own age I should judge. You're twenty-two, I think I've heard you say? Parmalee is perhaps twenty-three or twenty-four, but not more than that."

"Have you got your full crew shipped yet?" Drew inquired, after a pause.

"Well, some of them are aboard," was the answer. "We've got two dozen in round numbers, but we still need five or six more men before we get our full quota. Ditty's ashore looking them up now."

"Do you think they're going to suit you?"

"Oh, I've seen better crews and I've seen worse," answered the captain. "There are some of them whose faces I don't just like, but that's true in every ship's company. I guess they'll average up all right.

"There's one thing I want to show you," went on the captain, opening the door of a closet built into the cabin.

Drew looked, and was surprised to see as many as a dozen rifles, as well as several revolvers and a sheaf of machetes.

"Why, it looks like a small arsenal!" he exclaimed, in surprise. "What on earth will we want all these for? One might think that we expected to have a scrap ourselves with pirates on the Spanish Main."

"Not that exactly," said the captain laconically, "but in an enterprise like ours it's wise to take precautions. 'Better to be safe than be sorry.' If it's known that we're after treasure, there may be sundry persons who will take an unwholesome interest in our affairs."

"Do you mean members of the crew?"

"Not necessarily; though they may. It's not likely, for it's probably nothing but a turtle cay, but there may be people living on the island where we're going who would seriously dispute our right to take anything away and might try to stop us. Few of those small islands are inhabited; still, I'll feel a good deal more comfortable to know that I've got these weapons stowed away where I can get them at a moment's notice. By the way, do you know how to shoot?"

"Yes," answered Drew. "I belong to a rifle club, and I'm a fairly good shot with either a pistol or a gun."

"A useful accomplishment," commented the captain. "You never know when it may come in handy."

Drew was wild to go on deck again to talk with

Ruth. He had scarcely exchanged three sentences with her, and there were a thousand things he wanted to say. The time was getting so terribly short! In two days more he would be sailing away with her father, leaving her behind, and months might elapse before he could see her again.

It was his eager desire just now to get her interested in him to some extent, so that she would think of him sometimes while he was away; to give her some hint of the tumult in his heart; to let her guess something of the wealth of homage and adoration she had inspired. Surely, if he could talk with her, she could not fail to see something of what he felt. And seeing, she might perhaps respond.

"I suppose you'll find it hard to leave your daughter behind?" he ventured to say.

The captain looked at him in surprise.

"Bless your heart, I'm not going to leave her behind!" he exclaimed. "She's going with us after those doubloons," and he laughed.

CHAPTER XII

A SATISFACTORY OUTLOOK

Drew was transported with delight, but he threw a certain carelessness into his tone as he observed:

"I remember. Does she know what we're going for?"

"Oh yes," replied her father. "She and I are great chums, and I don't keep anything from her. She wanted to go with me anyway when I was thinking of taking on a cargo for Galveston, and now that she knows treasure is in the wind, she's more eager than ever. You know how romantic girls are, and she's looking forward with immense pleasure to this unusual venture of ours."

Drew would have liked to ask whether the captain's wife were going too, but he felt that he might be treading on delicate ground, so he used a roundabout method.

"I don't suppose there'll be any other women in the company?" he said lightly.

"No," replied the captain, a little soberly. "When my wife was alive she used to go with me occasionally on my voyages. The schooner's named for her. But she's been dead for three years now, and as Ruth is the only child I have, she and I will be

thrown together more closely than ever. She's finished school.

"But I'm keeping you," he added, rising from the table at which they had been sitting; "and I suppose you've got more work on your hands than you know how to attend to."

Drew rose with alacrity.

"I am pretty busy, for a fact," he assented. "That accident to Mr. Grimshaw has just about doubled my work. But it isn't getting the upper hand of me, and by the time we are ready to sail I'll have tied all the lose ends."

"That's good. By the way, speaking of Tyke, how did you find him this morning? I suppose you stopped in at the hospital on your way downtown as usual?"

"Yes. He's getting along in prime shape, but he's as sore as the mischief because he can't go along."

"It's too bad," remarked the captain sympathetically. "I'd have liked to have him along, not only for his company, but for his shrewdness as well. He's got a level head on those shoulders of his, and his advice at times might come in mighty handy.

"I won't go on deck with you, if you'll excuse me," continued the captain, reaching out his hand for a farewell shake, "because I've some work to do in connection with my clearance papers. Good-bye."

The young man was perfectly willing to be deprived of the captain's further company, much as

he liked him. The captain's daughter would make a very good substitute. He hoped ardently that she, unlike her father, would have no business to keep her below.

His hopes were realized, for he caught sight of her leaning on the rail and gazing out upon the river with as much absorption as though she had never seen it before.

Possibly it did interest her. Possibly, too, she had forgotten all about the handsome young man who was in conference with her father in the cabin. Possibly she had not been stirred by the adoration in his eyes or the agitation in his voice. So many things are possible!

Anyway, despite a heightened color in her cheeks and a starry brightness in her eyes, her start of surprise, as she looked up and saw Drew standing beside her, was done very well indeed.

"So you conspirators have got through plotting already," she said lightly.

"Yes," Drew laughed; "we've been going over every link of the chain and have decided that it is good and strong. Not that my judgment was worth very much, I fear, this morning."

"Why not?" she asked demurely.

"Because I couldn't put my mind on it," he answered. "My wits were wool gathering. I scarcely heard what your father said. I'm glad he isn't a mind reader."

"So few people are."

"I wish you were," he said earnestly.

She stiffened a little, and from that he took warning. He must check the impetuous words that strove for utterance. He had but barely met her. How was she to know the feelings that had possessed him since their casual encounter on the pier? He must not frighten her by trying to sweep her off her feet. This citadel was to be captured, if at all, by siege rather than by storm. He would risk disaster by being premature.

"Do you know," he said in a lighter tone, "that it was the surprise of my life when I found that your name was Hamilton?"

"Why should it have been a surprise?" she asked.

"Because I had been thinking all along that your name was Adams."

"What made you think that?" she inquired in genuine surprise.

"W—why," he stammered, "I saw that name on one of the letters when I picked up the packet from the grating of the boat."

She flushed.

"You musn't think," he said earnestly, "that I tried to pry. If I'd done that, I'd have found out the address at the same time. The name just looked up at me, and I couldn't help seeing it."

His tone carried conviction, and she unbent.

"I can see how you made the mistake," she smiled. "The letter on top of the packet was addressed to a very dear friend whose first name happens to be the same as mine. She and I were great chums in boarding school. The letter had been sent to her by a girl we both knew and who had been traveling abroad, and as Ruth knew I would be interested in it, she sent it on for me to read."

"That explains the foreign stamp," he commented.

"You noticed that too, did you?" she asked, flashing a mischievous glance at him. "Really, you took in a lot at a single look. You ought to be a detective."

"I wish I were," said Drew, as he thought ruefully of the unavailing plans he had made to find her. I'm afraid I'm a pretty bungling amateur."

"Well, you were only half wrong, anyway," she answered. "The first part of the name was right."

"Yes," he admitted. "But that didn't help me much. The last one didn't either for that matter. There are so many Adamses in the city."

"How do you know?" she challenged.

He grew red. "I—I looked in the directory," he confessed.

She thought it high time to change the subject.

"I suppose it will be quite a wrench to say goodbye to your people here," she remarked.

"I haven't any," replied Drew. "My father and

my mother died when I was small. The only brother I have is out West, and I haven't seen him for years. I've been boarding since I came to the city, five years ago."

"Oh, I'm sorry," she said with ready sympathy. "I know something of how you feel, because I lost my own mother three years ago. I've been in boarding school most of the time since then. So I know what it is to be without a real home. Sometimes our only home was on shipboard."

"But it's always possible to make a real home," said Drew daringly. Then he checked himself and bit his lip. That troublesome tongue of his! When would he learn to control it?

She pretended not to have heard him.

"I have my father left," she went on; "and he's the best father in the world."

"And the luckiest," put in Drew.

"He didn't want to take me on this trip at first," she continued, "but the most of my relatives and friends are in California, and I knew I'd be horribly lonely in New York. So I begged and teased him to let me go along, and at last he gave in."

"Of course he would," Drew said with conviction. "How could he help it?"

He knew that if she should ask him, Allen Drew, for the moon he would promise it to her without the slightest hesitation. He wished he dared tell her so.

"Have you ever been to sea?" she asked.

"No," replied Allen. "But I've always wanted to go."

And he told her of the longing that had sprung up in him when Captain Peters had spoken so indifferently about the wonder-lands of mystery and romance to which his bark was sailing.

While he talked, she was studying him closely, as is the way of girls, without appearing to do so. She noted the stalwart well-knit figure, the handsome features—the strong straight nose, the broad forehead, the brown eyes that sparkled with animation.

Drew was at his best when he talked, especially when his audience was attentive, and there was no doubt that his audience of one was that. She listened almost in silence only putting in a word now and then.

The thought came to him that he might be boring her, and he stopped abruptly.

"If I keep on, you'll be talked to death," he said apologetically.

"Not at all," she protested. "I've been intensely interested. I'm glad you feel so strongly about far-off places, because you're sure to find plenty of romance where we are going."

"And treasure, the doubloons, too—don't forget the doubloons," he laughed, lowering his voice and looking around to see that no one was listening.

"And that too," she agreed. "I suppose you've spent your share already?" she bantered.

"Well, I'm not quite so optimistic as all that," he laughed. "But I really think we have a chance. Don't you?"

"Indeed I do!" she exclaimed. "I don't think it's a wild goose chase at all!"

"I'm glad you feel that way about it."

"Even if things go wrong, we can't be altogether cheated," she went on. "We'll have had lots of fun looking for our treasure. Then, too, we'll have had the voyage, and the schooner is a splendid sailing craft."

"She's a beauty," assented Drew. "I don't wonder you're proud of her."

"It was really quite flattering that you men should tell me what you were going for," she said mockingly. "You're always saying that a woman can't keep a secret."

"I don't feel that way," protested Drew. "And to prove it, I'll——"

"Listen!" said Ruth hurriedly. "Wasn't that my father calling me?"

"I didn't hear him," he replied, looking at her suspiciously.

"I think I'd better go and make sure," decided Ruth, moved by a sudden impulse of filial duty.

"Let him call again," suggested Drew.

But Ruth was sure that this audacious young man had said quite enough for one morning, and she held out her hand.

"Good-bye," she smiled. "I know from what my father has told me that you have an awful lot to do to get ready for the trip."

"Have I?" rejoined Drew. "I'd forgotten all about them."

They laughed.

He held the soft hand and fluttering fingers a trifle longer than was absolutely necessary, and after he released them he stood watching her lithe figure until she disappeared.

When Drew left the *Bertha Hamilton* he was treading on air and his head was in the clouds.

His dream had come true—part of it at least. He had found her, had talked with her. He was going to sail in the same ship with her. They would be thrown together constantly in the enforced intimacy of an ocean voyage. He would see her in the morning, in the afternoon, in the evening. And at last he would win her. The last part of his dream would be realized as surely as the first had been.

But when he got back to the shop he found that he was in a practical world whose claims refused to be ignored. Winters still needed a lot of coaching, and the time was short. The business must not suffer while Drew was gone.

One thing lifted from his shoulders some of the weight of responsibility. Tyke would be at hand to superintend things and to keep a check on Winter's inexperience. To be sure, he would be in the

hospital for some time to come, but Winters could go to see him every evening, and get help in his problems.

The *Bertha Hamilton* was to sail at high tide on Thursday morning, and by Wednesday night Drew had sent his baggage on board and had settled the last item that belonged to Tyke's part of the contract. Everything from now on was in the hands of Captain Hamilton.

He went up to the hospital to report to his employer and to say farewell. They talked long and late, and both were strongly moved when they shook hands in parting. Who knew what might happen before they met again? Who knew that they ever would meet again?

"Good-bye, Mr. Grimshaw," said Drew. "I hope you'll be as well and as strong as ever when I get back."

"Good-bye, Allen," responded Tyke, with a suspicious moisture in his eyes. "I'll be rooting for you an' thinking of you all the time. Good-bye an' good luck."

At daybreak the next morning Drew stepped on board the *Bertha Hamilton* and the most thrilling experience of his life had begun.

CHAPTER XIII

STORM SIGNALS

NATURALLY Drew's first thought as he glanced about the vessel, was of Ruth. But it was too early for the young lady to be in evidence.

Captain Hamilton met him with a cordial grasp of the hand, and took him down to the room assigned to him for the voyage. It was one of a series of staterooms on either side of a narrow corridor aft, and, although of course small, it was snug and comfortable.

There was a berth built against one side of the room. Apart from a tiny washstand, with bowl and pitcher, and a small swinging rack for a few books, a chair completed the equipment of the stateroom. The room was immaculately neat and clean, and in a glass on the washstand was a tiny bunch of violets. Drew wondered who had put it there.

"Rather cramped," laughed the captain; "but we sailors have learned how to live in close quarters, and you'll soon get used to it. There are some drawers built into the side where you can put your clothes, and your trunk and bags can go under the berth."

"Drew, with his eyes and thoughts on the flowers, hastened to assure the captain that there was plenty of room.

"The stateroom next to yours, I had set aside for Tyke," said Captain Hamilton regretfully. "It's too bad that the old boy isn't coming. The one on the other side is Parmalee's."

"I suppose he hasn't come aboard yet?" half questioned Drew, as he unstrapped his bags, preparatory to putting their contents in the drawers.

"Oh, yes he has," returned the captain. "He came aboard last night. I suppose he's still asleep. Haven't heard him stirring yet."

"What time do you expect to pull out?" asked Drew.

"Almost any minute now. We've got everything aboard and we're only waiting for the tug that will take us down the bay. The wind's not so fair this morning."

The captain excused himself and went on deck, and a little later, having finished his unpacking, the younger man followed him.

The one person on whom his thoughts were centered was still invisible, and Drew had ample time to watch the busy scene upon the schooner's deck. The members of the crew were hurrying about in obedience to shouted orders, stowing away the last boxes and provisions that had come on board.

The sails were in stops ready to be broken out when the vessel should be out in the stream. A snorting tug was nosing her way alongside. A slight mist that had rested on the surface of the

water was being rapidly dissipated by the freshening breeze, and over the Long Island horizon the sun was coming up, red and resplendent.

Drew made his way along the deck until he came near the foremast, where the mate was standing, bawling orders to the men. He was a tall, spare man, and in his voice there was a ring of authority, not to say truculence, that boded ill for any man who did not jump when spoken to. His back was toward Drew, but there was something about the figure that seemed familiar.

While he was wondering why this was so, the man turned, and, with amazement, Drew saw that the mate of the *Bertha Hamilton* was the one-eyed man with whom he had had his unpleasant encounter upon the Jones Lane wharf.

There was a flash of recognition and plenty of insolence in that one eye as it was turned upon Drew, but the next moment the man had turned his back and was again bellowing at the sailors.

Drew had a feeling of discomfort. He knew from the look the mate had given him that he still cherished malice. It was unpleasant to have a discordant note struck at the very outset of the voyage. And then, there was the suspicious circumstance of Grimshaw's accident. A one-eyed seaman had figured in that. Should he go to Captain Hamilton and report his vague suspicions of this fellow?

He had no time to pursue the thought, however,

for at that moment he heard the clang of a gong, and an ambulance came dashing out on the pier just as the moorings of the *Bertha Hamilton* were about to be cast off.

Drew's first thought was that an accident had happened, and he hurried over to the starboard rail.

The ambulance had stopped, and two white-clad attendants were helping out a man who had been reclining on a mattress within. They stood him on one foot while they slipped a pair of crutches under his arms. The man lifted his head, and, with a yell of delight, Drew leaped to the wharf.

It was Tyke Grimshaw! Pale and haggard the old man looked, but his indomitable spirit was still in evidence and his eyes twinkled with the old whimsical smile.

"Hurrah!" yelled Drew.

The cry was echoed by Captain Hamilton, who had likewise leaped from the taffrail to the pier.

"Didn't expect to see me, eh?" queried Tyke, while the ambulance men stood by, grinning.

"No, I didn't," roared Captain Hamilton, gripping him by one hand while Drew held the other. "But I can't tell you how glad I am that you made up your mind to come."

"We might have known you'd get here if you had to walk on your hands," cried Drew jubilantly.

"Had to fight like the mischief to get them doctors to let me come," chortled Tyke, evidently de-

lighted by the warmth of the greeting. "They told me I was jest plumb crazy to think of it. But after Allen, here, left me last night I got so lonesome an' restless there was no holding me. Seemed like I'd go wild if I'd had to stay in that sick-bay while you fellers were sniffing the sea air. So I jest reared up on my hind legs, as you might say, an' they had to let me come."

"And you got here just in the nick of time," said the captain. "Ten minutes more and we'd have been slipping down the river."

Carefully supporting him on either side, for he found the unaccustomed crutches awkward, Captain Hamilton and Drew helped him on board the vessel and seated him comfortably in a deck chair.

Tyke drew in great draughts of the salt-laden air and his eyes glistened as he scrutinized the lines and spars of the schooner, noting her beauties with the expert eye of the sailor.

"Great little craft," he said approvingly. "I wouldn't have missed sailing on her for the world. A cruise in a tidy schooner like this will do me more good than them blamed doctors could if they fiddled around me for a year."

"How is your leg feeling now?" asked Drew solicitously.

"Better already," grinned Tyke. "In less'n a week I'll be chucking these crutches overboard. See if I don't."

Suddenly Tyke fell silent. Drew turned swiftly and saw that the old man was staring under bent brows at the mate of the schooner.

"Who's that?" Tyke finally demanded.

"That's Ditty—my mate," said Captain Hamilton. "I told you he was no handsome dog, didn't I?"

"Ugh!" grunted Tyke, and said no more.

Before Drew could ask the question that was on the tip of his tongue, a musical voice at his elbow said:

"Good morning, Mr. Drew."

He was on his feet in a flash, holding out his hand in eager greeting. "I was wondering when I was going to see you!" he exclaimed.

"You'll probably see too much of me before this voyage is over," Ruth said demurely. "I expect you men will be frightfully bored with one lone woman hovering around all the time."

Drew's eyes were eloquent with denial.

"Impossible!" he said emphatically. Then he became conscious that Tyke was looking on with some curiosity.

"Oh, I forgot," he said. "Mr. Grimshaw, this is Miss Hamilton, Captain Hamilton's daughter. Miss Hamilton, this is Captain Grimshaw."

Ruth held out her hand, but Tyke deliberately drew her to him and kissed her on the cheek. She extricated herself blushingly.

"An old man's privilege, my dear," said Tyke placidly. "An' I've known your father going on thirty years."

Drew wished that it were a young man's privilege as well.

"So you're Rufus Hamilton's daughter," went on Tyke. "My, my! An' pooty as a picture, too."

Ruth flushed a little at so open a compliment, but smiled at Grimshaw and said brightly:

"I'm so glad you can come with us. I was dreadfully sorry to hear of your accident. It would have been horrid for you to stay cooped up in that old hospital. Father has told me how much you had counted on the trip."

"The old craft isn't a derelict jest yet," replied Tyke complacently. "I'm afraid I'll be something of a nuisance till I get steady on my pins again, but I'll try not to be too much in the way."

"We'll all be glad to wait on you, I'm sure," protested Ruth, with another smile that won Grimshaw completely.

"I'll go down now and see how Wah Lee is getting along with breakfast," the girl continued. "I've no doubt you folks will be hungry enough to do justice to it."

"This air would give an appetite to a mummy," declared Drew.

"I'm some sharp set myself," admitted Tyke, as the fragrance of steaming coffee was wafted to him

from the cook's galley. "Jest the very thought of eating in a ship's cabin again makes me hungry."

Drew's eyes followed the girl as she disappeared down the companionway, and when he looked up it was to find Tyke regarding him amusedly.

"So that's the way the wind blows, is it?" the old man chuckled.

"Nonsense!" disclaimed Drew, although conscious that his tone did not carry conviction. "She's a very nice girl, but this is only the second time I've met her." To avoid further prodding, he added: "I'll go down to your room and see if that Jap has put things shipshape for you."

As he went to the room reserved for Grimshaw, he met Ruth just coming out of it. Her skirts brushed against him in the narrow corridor and he tingled to the finger tips.

"I've just put a few flowers in Mr. Grimshaw's room," she said. "They seem to make the bare little cubby holes a bit more homey, don't you think? I thought they would be a sort of welcome."

Drew agreed with her, but the hope he had been hugging to his breast that he had been singled out for special attention vanished.

"I was foolish enough to think that I had them all," he confessed with a sheepish grin.

"What a greedy man!" she laughed. "No, indeed! Did you think I was going to overlook my

father or Mr. Parmalee? You men are so conceited!"

As though the mention of his name had summoned him, the door of a neighboring stateroom opened just then and a young man stepped out. He smiled pleasantly as his gaze fell on Ruth.

"Good morning, Miss Ruth. I'm incorrigibly lazy, I'm afraid," he remarked, "or else this good air is responsible for my sleeping more soundly than for a long time past."

Ruth assured him that it was still early.

"If you are lazy, the sun is too," she said, "for, like yourself, it has just risen."

"That makes him lazier," returned Parmalee, "for he went to rest a good deal earlier than I did last night."

Ruth laughed, and, after introducing the young men to each other, she vanished in the direction of the captain's cabin.

The pair exchanged the usual commonplaces as they moved toward the companionway. Parmalee walked with some difficulty, leaning on a cane, and Drew had to moderate his pace to keep in step. When they emerged into the full light of the upper deck, Drew had a chance to gain an impression of the man who was to be his fellow-voyager.

Lester Parmalee was fully four inches shorter than the trifle over six feet to which Drew owned, and his slender frame gave him an appearance of

fragility. This impression was heightened by the cane on which he leaned and the lines in his face which bespoke delicate health. His complexion was pale, and seemed more pallid because of its contrast with a mass of coal black hair which overhung his rather high forehead. His nose and mouth were good and his eyes dark and keenly intelligent. Some would have called him handsome. Others would have qualified this by the adjective romantic. All would have agreed that he was a gentleman.

His physical weakness was atoned for to a great extent by other qualities that grew on one by longer acquaintance. His manners were polished, his mind trained and well stored. He was a graduate of Harvard and had traveled extensively. His inherited wealth had not spoiled him, although it had, perhaps, given him too much self-assurance and just a shade of superciliousness.

The two young men as they chatted formed a violent contrast. If Drew suggested the Viking type, Parmalee would, with equal fitness, have filled the role of a troubadour. The one was powerful and direct, the other suave and subtle. One could conceive of Drew's wielding a broad axe, but would have put in Parmalee's hands a rapier. Each had his own separate and distinct appeal both to men and women.

Drew introduced Parmalee to Grimshaw. Then

the captain came along, and all four were engaged in an animated conversation when Namco, the Japanese steward, announced:

"Lady say I make honorable report: Bleakfast!"

"And high time for it!" cried the captain. "I'm as hungry as a hawk and I guess the rest of you are too. We'll go down and see what that slant-eyed Celestial has knocked up for us."

Wah Lee had "done himself proud" in this initial meal, which proved to be abundant, well-cooked and appetizing.

All were in high spirits as they gathered about the table. Ordinarily, the mate would have formed one of the company while the second officer stood the captain's watch. But the narrow quarters and the unusual number of passengers on this trip made it necessary that the mate should eat after the captain and his guests had finished.

The captain sat at the head of the table while Ruth presided over the coffee urn at the foot. Tyke sat at the captain's right, and the two young men were placed one on either side of their hostess.

She wore a fetching breakfast cap, which did not prevent a rebellious wisp or two of golden hair from playing about her pink ears. Her cheeks were rosy, her eyes sparkling, and her demure little housewifely air as she poured the coffee was bewitching. The excitement of the start, the novelty of the quest on which they had embarked, and the

presence of two young and attentive cavaliers put her on her mettle, and she was full of quaint sayings and witty sallies.

Her father gazed on her fondly, Tyke beamed approvingly, and Parmalee's admiration was undisguised. As for Drew, the havoc she had already made in his heart reached alarming proportions. He found himself picturing a home ashore, where every morning that face would be opposite to him at the breakfast table with that ravishing dimple coming and going as she smiled at him.

"How do you like your coffee?" she asked him, her slender fingers hovering over the cream jug and the sugar tongs.

"Two lumps of cream and plenty of sugar," he responded.

She laughed mischievously.

"We always try to please," she said; "but really our cream doesn't come in lumps."

He reddened.

"I surely did get that twisted," he said a little sheepishly. "Suppose we put it the other way around."

"I guess your mind was far away," she jested. "You must have been thinking of the treasure."

"That's exactly right," he returned, looking into her eyes as he took the cup she handed him. "I was thinking of the treasure."

CHAPTER XIV

BEGINNING THE VOYAGE

Ruth bent a little lower over her coffee urn to hide the additional flush that had come into her cheeks, and after that she guided the conversation to safer ground and took care to leave no opening for Drew's audacity.

The meal over, all went on deck. The captain took charge and sent Ditty and Rogers, the second officer, below to get breakfast. The crew had already breakfasted.

Tyke had been carefully helped up by Drew and Captain Hamilton and placed in a chair abaft the mizzenmast, where his keen old eyes could delight themselves with the activities of the crew. Ruth had fussed around him prettily with cushions and a rest for his injured leg, until the veteran vowed that he would surely be spoiled before the voyage was over.

They had passed the Battery by this time, and were moving sluggishly with the tide. Behind them stretched the vast metropolis, with its wonderful sky-line sharply outlined by the bright rays of the morning sun. The Goddess of Liberty held her torch aloft as though to guide them in their venture.

At the right the hills of Staten Island smiled in their vernal beauty, while at the left, white stretches of gleaming beach indicated the pleasure resorts where the people of the teeming city came to play.

Ditty had come on deck again. Unpleasant though his countenance was, and as suspicious as Drew was of him, it was plain that the mate of the *Bertha Hamilton* was a good seaman.

He looked now at Captain Hamilton for permission to make sail. The latter signed to him to go ahead. Useless to pay towage with a favoring wind and flowing tide.

Ditty bawled to the crew:

"Break her out, bullies! H'ist away tops'ls!"

The halyards were promptly manned. One man started the chorus that jerked the main topsail aloft.

"Oh, come all you little yaller boys
An' roll the cotton *down!*
Oh, a husky pull, my bully boys,
An' roll the cotton *down!*"

In a trice, it would seem, her three topsails were mastheaded and the foretopsail laid to the mast. The fore-braces came in, hand over hand, the hawsers were tossed overboard and the tug fell astern. The *Bertha Hamilton* leaned gracefully to the freshening gale, and was shooting for the Narrows.

"It is perfectly beautiful, isn't it?" cried Ruth.

"Magnificent," agreed Drew.

"It's the finest harbor in all the world, to my mind," declared Parmalee.

"I wonder when we'll see it again," mused Ruth, with a touch of apprehension in her voice.

"Oh, it won't be long before we're back," prophesied Parmalee.

"And when we do come back, we'll have enough doubloons with us to buy up the whole city," joked Drew.

"Don't be too sure of that," smiled Ruth. "Those who go out to shear sometimes come back shorn."

"We simply can't fail," asserted Drew. "Especially as we're taking a mascot along with us."

"The mascot may prove to be a hoodoo," laughed Ruth. "I've thought more than once that I shouldn't have teased my father to take me along."

"He'd have robbed the whole trip of brightness if he had refused," affirmed Parmalee.

"It's nice of you to say that," returned Ruth. "But if any serious trouble should come up, fighting or anything of that kind, you might find me terribly in the way."

"We'd only have an additional reason to fight the harder," declared Drew. "No harm should come to you while any of us were left alive. But really, there's nothing to worry about. This trip is going to be a summer excursion."

"Nothing more serious to fear than the ghosts of some of the old pirates who may be keeping guard over their doubloons and may resent our intrusion," said Parmalee.

"I'm not afraid of ghosts," cried Ruth. "It's only creatures of flesh and blood that give me any worry."

"If anything should come up," said Drew, "we're in pretty good shape to give the mischief-makers a tussle. Your father has a good collection of weapons down in the cabin."

"Yes," assented Ruth; "and I know how to load and handle a revolver."

Drew put up his hands in pretended fright.

"Don't shoot!" he pleaded.

Thus with jest and compliment and banter the time passed until they were off Sandy Hook. The breeze, while brisk, was light enough to warrant carrying all sails, and a cloud of canvas soon billowed from aloft. One after another the sails were broken out on all three masts until they creaked with the strain. The *Bertha Hamilton* heeled over to port, and with every stitch drawing before a following wind gathered way until she boomed along at a gait that swiftly carried her out of sight of land. Before long the Sandy Hook Lightship sank from view astern, and nothing could be seen on any side but the foam-streaked billows of the Atlantic.

When the schooner was fairly under way and the

watches had been chosen, the captain gave her into charge of the mate and rejoined Tyke.

That grizzled veteran was enjoying himself more than he had done at any time for the last twenty years. As the old warhorse "sniffs the battle from afar," so he already anticipated with delight the coming battle with wind and waves.

"Well, Tyke, what do you think of her?" the captain asked.

"She's a jim dandy!" ejaculated Tyke enthusiastically. "She rides the waves like a feather. Jest slips along like she was greased."

"She's a sweet sailer," declared the captain proudly. "Just wait till you see how she manages against head winds. Even when she's jammed up right into the wind, she's good for six knots, and with any kind of a fair gale, she's good for ten or twelve."

"With ordinary luck, then, we ought to git to the Caribbean in ten or twelve days," said Tyke.

"Unless we meet up with something that strips our spars," returned the captain confidently. "Of course, a hurricane might knock us out in our calculations. Taking it by and large though, and allowing for the time we may have to cruise around before we find the island we're looking for, I'm figuring that we'll make Sandy Hook again in two months all right."

"Better count on three and be sure," cautioned

Grimshaw. "You know it isn't a matter of simply finding the island, staying there mebbe a day or two an' coming away again. This is more'n jest sending a boat's crew ashore for water. We may be a month hunting around and trying to find the pesky thing."

"And even then we may not find it," laughed the captain.

"Well, it'll be some satisfaction if we even find the hole it used to be in," said Tyke. "That'll show that we weren't altogether fools in taking the paper an' map for gospel truth."

"I don't know that there'd be much comfort in that," returned Captain Hamilton. "If you're hungry it doesn't do much good to look at the hole in a doughnut. There isn't much nourishment except in the doughnut itself," and he grinned over his little joke.

The wind held fair for the rest of the day, and the schooner kept on at a spanking gait, reeling off the miles steadily. By night the increasing warmth of the air showed how rapidly the South was drawing near.

Ruth was a good sailor and felt no bad effect from the long ocean swells as the ship ploughed over them. Drew, too, who had no sea-going experience at all and had inwardly dreaded possible seasickness, was delighted to find that he was to be exempt.

Parmalee, however, although he had traveled extensively, had never been immune from paying tribute to Neptune. He ate but little at the noonday meal, and when the rest gathered around the table at night he did not appear at all.

Drew felt that he should be sympathetic, and, to do him justice, he tried to be. He visited Parmalee in his cabin, condoled with him, and offered to be of any possible service. But Parmalee wanted nothing except to be let alone, and, with the consciousness of duty done, Drew left him to his misery and joined the rest at the table.

"I'm awfully sorry for poor Mr. Parmalee," remarked Ruth, as she poured Drew's tea.

"Poor fellow," chimed in the young man perfunctorily.

"You don't say that as though you meant it at all," objected Ruth reprovingly.

"What do you expect me to do?" laughed Drew. "Weep bitter tears? I'll do it if you want me to. In fact, I'll do anything you want me to do—jump through a hoop, roll over, play dead, anything at all."

"I didn't know you had so many accomplishments," remarked Ruth, with a touch of sarcasm.

"Oh, I'm a perfect wonder," replied the young man. "There isn't anything I can't do or wouldn't do—for you," he added, dropping his voice so that only she could hear it.

Ruth, however, pretended not to hear, and addressed her next remark to Grimshaw.

"How do you like Wah Lee's cooking?" she asked.

"Fine," replied Tyke. "There's no better cooks anywhere than the Chinks. Want to look out that he don't slip one over on you, though, if the victuals run short. Might serve up cat or rat or something of the kind an' call it pork or veal. An' he'd probably git away with it, too."

Ruth gave a little shudder.

"Cat might not be so bad at that," remarked her father. "Down in Chili, for instance, they haven't any rabbits and they serve up cats instead. 'Gato piquante' they call it, which means savory cat. I've never tasted it, but I know those who have, and they say that it makes the finest kind of stew."

"Why not?" commented Drew, with a grin. "Catfish is good. So is catsup. Why not cat stew?"

"I think you men are just horrid!" exclaimed Ruth. "Taking away poor Wah Lee's character like this behind his back."

"Well, I guess we won't have to worry about his falling from grace on this cruise," laughed her father. "We're too well stocked up for him to be driven to try experiments."

When they went up on deck, the moon had risen. Its golden light tipped the waves with a sheen of

glory and turned the spray into so much glittering diamond dust. Under its magic witchery, the ropes and rigging looked like lace work woven by fairy fingers.

The crew were grouped up in the bow, and one of them was playing a concertina. Mr. Rogers paced the deck, casting a look aloft from time to time to see that the sails were drawing well. The wind had a slight musical sound as it swept through the rigging, and this blended with the regular slapping of the water against her sides as the *Bertha Hamilton* sailed steadily on her course.

The air was the least bit chilly, and this gave Drew an excuse for tucking Ruth cozily into the chair he had placed in a sheltered position behind the deckhouse. His fingers trembled as he drew the rugs and shawls around her. She snuggled down, wholly content to be waited on so devotedly, and perhaps—who knows?—sharing to some degree the emotion that made the man's pulse race so madly.

CHAPTER XV

THE GREEN-EYED MONSTER

DREW placed his own chair close beside Ruth's—as close as he dared. And they talked.

There was something in the witchery of that moonlit night that seemed to remove certain restraints and reserves imposed by the cold light of day, and they spoke more freely of their lives and hopes and ambitions than would have been possible a few hours earlier.

The girl told of the main events that had filled her nineteen years of life. Her voice was tender when she spoke of her mother, whose memory remained with her as a benediction. After she had been deprived by death of this gentle presence, she, Ruth, had stayed with relatives in Santa Barbara and Los Angeles during her vacations and had passed the rest of her time at boarding school. She had neither sister nor brother, and she spoke feelingly of this lack, which had become more poignant since her mother's death. She had felt lonely and restless, and the bright spots in her life had been those which were made for her by the return of her father from his voyages.

Of her father she spoke with enthusiasm. Nobody could have been more thoughtful of her comfort and happiness than he had been. The fact

that they were all that were left of their family, had made them the more dependent for their happiness on each other, and the affection between them was very strong.

It had been her dearest wish that he should be able to retire from the sea entirely, so that she could make a home for him ashore. As far as means went, she supposed he was able to give up his vocation now if he chose. But he was still in the prime of health and vigor, and she had little doubt that the sea—that jealous mistress—would beckon to him for years to come.

This time she could not bear being left behind, and as the voyage promised to be a short one, he had yielded to her persuasions to be taken along.

Drew listened with the deepest sympathy and interest, watching the play of emotion that accompanied her words and made her mobile features even more charming than usual.

Encouraged by her confidences, he in turn told her of his experiences and ambitions. He could scarcely remember his parents, and to this degree his life had been even more lonely than her own. He had come to the city from an inland town in New York State when he was but little over seventeen, and had secured a position in the chandlery shop. He had worked hard and had gained the confidence and good will of his employer, of whose goodness of heart he spoke in the warmest terms.

His own feeling for Tyke, he explained, was what he imagined he would have felt for his father if the latter had lived. He had felt that he was progressing, and had been fairly content until lately.

But now—and his voice took on a tone that stirred Ruth as she listened—he had been shaken entirely out of that contentment. He had suddenly realized that life held more than he had ever dreamed. There was something new and rich and vital in it, something full of promise and enchantment, something that he must have, something that he would give his soul to get.

He had grown so earnest as he talked, so compelling, his eyes so glowed with fire and feeling, that Ruth, though thrilled, felt almost frightened at his intensity. She knew perfectly well what he meant, knew that he was wooing her with all his heart and soul. And the knowledge was sweet to her.

But he had come too far and fast in his wooing, and she was not yet at the height of her own emotion. To be sure, he had attracted her strongly from the very first. From the day when she had met him on the pier, she had thought often of the gallant young knight who had aided her in her emergency, and his delight when he had found her on her father's ship had been only a shade greater than her own.

But, although her heart was in a tumult and she

secretly welcomed his advances, she did not want to be carried off her feet by the sheer ardor of his passion. She wanted to study him, to know him better, and to know her own feelings. She was not to be won too easily and quickly. An obscure virginal instinct rather resented the excessive sureness of this impetuous suitor.

So she roused herself from the soft languor into which the moonlight and his burning words had plunged her, and rallied, jested and parried, until, despite his efforts, the conversation took a lighter tone.

"You've made quite an impression on daddy," she laughed. "He thinks it was wonderfully clever of you to get at the meaning of that map and the confession as quickly as you did."

"I'm glad if he likes me," Drew answered. "I may have to ask him something important before long, and it will be a good thing to stand well with him."

"He'll be on your side," she replied lightly. "I wouldn't dare tell you all the nice things he has said about you. It might make you conceited, and goodness knows——"

"Am I conceited?" he asked quickly.

"All men are," she answered evasively.

"I don't think I am," he protested. "As a matter of fact, I'm very humble. I find myself wondering all the time if I am worthy."

"Worthy of what?" she asked.

"Worthy of getting what I want," he answered.

"The doubloons?" she asked mischievously. "Dear me! I can hardly imagine you in a humble role. To see the confident Mr. Drew in such a mood would certainly be refreshing."

"Don't call me Mr. Drew," he protested. "It sounds so formal. We're going to be so like one big family on this ship for the next few weeks that it seems to me we might cut out some of the formality without hurting anything."

"What shall I call you then?" she asked demurely.

"There are lots of things that I should like to have you call me if I dared suggest them," he replied. "But for the present, suppose you call me Allen."

"Very well, then—Allen," she conceded.

His pulses leaped.

"I don't suppose I'd dare go further and beg permission to call you Ruth?" he hazarded.

"Make it Miss Ruth," she teased.

"No, Ruth," he persisted.

"Oh, well," she yielded, "I suppose you'll have to have it your own way. It's frightful to have to deal with such an obstinate man as you are, Mr.—Allen."

"It's delightful to have to deal with such a charming girl as you are, Miss—Ruth."

They laughed happily.

"It's getting late," she said, drawing herself up out of the warm nest that Drew had made for her, "and I think I really ought to go below."

"Don't go yet," he begged. "It isn't a bit late."

"How late is it?" she asked.

He drew out his watch and looked at it in the moonlight.

"I told you it wasn't late," he declared, putting the watch back in his pocket.

"You don't dare let me look at it," she laughed.

"It must be fast," he affirmed.

"You're a deceiver," she retorted. "Really I must go. You wouldn't rob me of my beauty sleep, would you?"

"Leave that to other girls," he suggested. "You don't need it."

"You're a base flatterer," she chided.

Drew reluctantly gathered up her wraps, and, with a last lingering look at the glory of the sea and sky, they went below.

It was not really necessary for him to take her hand as they parted for the night, but he did so.

"Good night, Ruth," he said softly.

"Good night—Allen," she answered in a low voice.

His eyes held hers for a moment, and then she vanished.

It was the happiest night that Drew had ever

known. He had opened his heart to her—not so far as he would have liked and dared, but as far as she had permitted him. And in the soft beauty of her eyes he thought that he had detected the beginnings of what he wanted to find there. And she had permitted him to call her "Ruth." And she had called him "Allen." How musical the name sounded, coming from her lips!

It was fortunate that he had the memory of that night to comfort him in the days that followed.

Ruth was more distracting than ever the next morning when she appeared, fresh and radiant, at the breakfast table. But in some impalpable way she seemed to have withdrawn within herself. Perhaps she felt that she had let herself go too far in the glamour of the moonlight.

She was, if anything, gayer than before, full of bright quips and sayings that kept them laughing, but she distributed her favors impartially to all. And she was blandly unresponsive to Drew's efforts to monopolize her attentions.

It was so all through that day and the next. There was nothing about her that was stiff or repellant, but, nevertheless, Drew felt that she was keeping him at arm's length. It was as though she had served notice that she would be a jolly comrade, but nothing more.

Poor Drew, unused to the ways of women, could not understand her. He tried again and again to

get her by herself, in the hope that he might regain the ground that seemed to be slipping away from under him. But she seemed to have developed a sudden fondness for the society of her father and Grimshaw, and she managed in some way to include one or both of them in the walks and chats that Drew sought to make exclusive.

Then, too, there was Parmalee.

That young man fully recovered from his seasickness after the third day out and resumed his place in the life of the ship.

Ruth had been full of solicitude and attentions during his illness, and when he again took his place at table, she expressed her pleasure with a warmth that Drew felt was unnecessary. His own congratulations were much more formal.

Parmalee seemed to feel that he had appeared somewhat at a disadvantage in succumbing to the illness which the others had escaped, and the feeling put him on his mettle. He made special efforts to be genial and companionable, and his conversation sparkled with jests and epigrams. He could talk well; and even Drew had to admit to himself grudgingly that the other young man was brilliant.

Ruth, always fond of reading, had turned to books in her loneliness after her mother's death and had read widely for a girl of nineteen, and their familiarity with literature made a common ground on which she and Parmalee could meet with inter-

est. He had brought along quite a number of volumes which he offered to lend to Ruth and to Drew.

Ruth thanked him prettily and accepted. Drew thanked him cooly and declined.

All three were sitting on deck one afternoon, while Tyke and the captain talked earnestly apart. Ruth's dainty fingers were busy with some bit of embroidery. Her eyes were bent on her work, but the eyes of the young men rested on her. And both were thinking that the object of their gaze was well worth looking at.

Ruth herself knew perfectly well the attraction she exerted. And she would have been less than human if she had not been pleased with it. What girl of nineteen would not enjoy the homage of a Viking and a troubadour?

She was not a coquette, but there was a certain satisfaction that she could not wholly deny herself in playing one off against the other. It would do Drew no harm to make him a little less sure of himself and of her. In her heart she liked his Lochinvar methods, while, at the same time, she rather resented them. She was no cave woman, to be dragged off at will by a determined lover.

She had a real liking for Parmalee. He was suave, polished and deferential. His attentions gallant without being obtrusive, and his geniality and culture made him a very pleasant companion.

"We're like the Argonauts going out after the Golden Fleece," Parmalee was remarking.

"Yes," Ruth smiled, looking up from her work, "it doesn't seem as though this were the twentieth century at all. Here we are, as much adventurers as they were in the old times of Jason and his companions."

"Let's hope we'll be as lucky as they were," said Drew. "If I remember rightly, they got what they went after."

"And yet when they started out they weren't a bit more sure than we are," rejoined Parmalee.

"And we won't find any old dragon waiting to swallow us, as they did," laughed Ruth.

"Well, whether we find the treasure or not, we'll have plenty of fun in hunting for it," prophesied Parmalee. "Somehow, I feel that we are on the brink of a great adventure. I think I know something of the feeling of the old explorers when they first came down to these parts. Do you remember the way Keats describes it, Miss Ruth?"

"I don't recall," answered Ruth.

"I'll go and get the book. I have it in my cabin. Or wait. Perhaps I can remember the way it goes." He paused a moment, and then began:

"Then feel I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes

He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

"What noble verse!" exclaimed Ruth.

Drew remained silent.

"The very air of these southern seas is full of romance," went on Parmalee. "And of tradition too. Have you ever heard the story of Drake's drum?"

"What is it?" asked Ruth.

"The old drum of Sir Francis Drake that called his men to battle is still preserved in the family castle in England," explained Parmalee. "It went with him on all his voyages. It beat the men to quarters in the fight with the Spanish Armada and in all his battles on the Spanish Main, when, to use his own words, he was 'singeing the whiskers of the King of Spain.' He was buried at sea in the West Indies, and the drum beat taps when his body was lowered into the waves.

"The story goes that when Drake was dying he ordered that the drum should be sent back to England. Whenever the country should be in mortal danger, his countrymen were to beat that drum, and Drake's spirit would come back and lead them to victory."

"And have they ever done it?" asked Ruth, intensely interested.

"Twice," replied Parmalee. "Once when the Dutch fleet entered the Thames with a broom at the masthead to show that they were going to sweep the British from the seas. They beat it again when Nelson broke the sea power of Napoleon at Trafalgar.

"Here's what an English writer supposes Drake to have said when he was dying:

'Take my drum to England, hang it by the shore,
Strike it when your powder's running low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port of heaven
And drum them up the Channel, as we drummed
them long ago.'"

"How stirring that is!" cried Ruth, clapping her hands.

"Yes," admitted Drew, a little dryly. "They must have forgotten to beat it though at the time of the American Revolution."

It was a discordant note and all felt it.

"Oh, how horrid of you!" exclaimed Ruth. "You take all the romance out of the story."

"I'm sorry," said Drew, instantly penitent.

"I don't believe you are a bit," declared Ruth. "And Mr. Parmalee told that story so beautifully," she added, with a wicked little desire to punish Drew.

"Cross my heart and hope to die," protested

Drew, to appease his divinity. "Put any penance on me you like. I'll sit in sackcloth and put ashes on my head if you say so, and you'll never hear a whimper."

"He seems to be suffering horribly," said Parmalee, a bit sarcastically, "and you know, Miss Ruth, that cruel and unusual punishments are forbidden by the Constitution. I think you'd better forgive him."

Ruth laughed and the tension was broken. But there was still a little feeling of restraint, and after a few minutes Parmalee excused himself and strolled away.

Ruth kept on stitching busily, her face bent studiously over her work.

Drew looked at her miserably, bitterly regretting the momentary impulse to which he had yielded. He knew in his heart that he had been jealous of the impression that Parmalee, by his easy and graceful narration, had seemed to be making on Ruth, and he hated himself for it.

"Ruth," he said softly.

She seemed not to have heard him.

"Ruth," he repeated.

"Yes?" she answered, but without looking up.

CHAPTER XVI

GATHERING CLOUDS

"Ruth," Drew pleaded. "Look at me."

She dropped her work then and met his eyes.

"You're angry with me, aren't you?" he asked.

"No; I'm not angry," she replied slowly.

"But you're vexed?" he suggested.

"I should say rather that I am sorry," she answered. "Everything has been so pleasant between us all up to now, and I hoped it was going to remain so."

"It was that impulsive tongue of mine," he said. "The words slipped out before I thought."

"What you said was nothing," she replied. "But the tone in which you spoke was unpleasant. It seemed as though you were trying to put a damper on things. It came like a dash of cold water, and I'm sure that Mr. Parmalee felt chilled by it."

"You seem very much interested in Mr. Parmalee's feelings," he said, with a return of jealousy at the mention of the other's name.

"No more than I am in those of any of my friends," she answered. "I think he is very nice, and I was very much interested in what he was saying," she added, with a tiny touch of malice.

But she repented instantly as she saw the pain in Drew's eyes.

"Let's forget all about it!" she exclaimed. "It was only a trifle, anyway."

"You forgive me then?" he asked.

"Of course I forgive you, you foolish boy! And to prove it, I'm not going to make you do any penance," she added gaily.

From that time, a smile from Ruth raised Drew to the seventh heaven, but when her smile was bestowed on Parmalee, he was dashed to the depths.

One thing especially was calculated to torture the jealous heart of a lover. Several times Drew observed Ruth and Parmalee engaged in what seemed to be a peculiarly confidential talk. Their heads were close together and their voices low. They seemed to be talking of something that concerned themselves alone.

The first time he saw them together in this way, he strolled up to them, but they changed instantly to a lighter and more careless tone, and introduced a topic in which he could join. But Ruth's face was flushed and Parmalee was scarcely able to disguise his impatience at the interruption.

After the first time, Drew left them alone. His pride refused to let him be a third in a conversation plainly designed for two.

In his secret musings Allen Drew dwelt on and exaggerated the advantages which Parmalee possessed. To be sure, he was weak and delicate, while Drew had the strength of a young ox. But Par-

malee had wealth and standing and a polished manner that appealed strongly to women. Why should he not, with his suavity and winning smile, fascinate an impressionable girl?

Ruth herself, warned by the chilliness between the men that grew more pronounced with every day that passed, did her best to be prudent. The mischievous pleasure of having them both dangle when she pulled the strings had been replaced by a feeling almost of alarm. She realized enough of the fervor of Drew's passion to know that he was in deadly earnest and would brook no rivalry.

Tyke had been enjoying himself hugely from the start. He had utterly cast aside all thoughts of the business he had left behind him, and when Drew sometimes referred to it he refused to listen. The sea air and the delight of being once more in the surroundings of his early days had proved a tonic. His leg mended with magical rapidity, and by the time they had been ten days at sea he cast aside his crutches and managed to get about with the aid of a cane. Almost every moment of the day and evening when he was not at meals, he spent on deck, exchanging yarns with Captain Hamilton, studying the set of the sails, or gazing on the boundless expanse of sea and sky.

The weather so far had been perfect, and the schooner had slipped along steadily and rapidly, most of the time carrying her full complement of

canvas. The captain thought that in about two or three days more they would be in the vicinity of Martinique. Once there, to the westward of that island, they would cruise about until the cay shaped like the hump of a whale should appear on the horizon.

But despite the good weather, there had been for some time past a shadow on the face of the captain which betrayed uneasiness. The young people, absorbed in their own affairs, had not noticed it, but Tyke's shrewd eyes had seen that all was not well, and one day when the captain dropped into a chair beside him, he broached the subject without ceremony.

"What's troubling you, Cap'n Rufe?" he asked. "Out with it and git it off your chest."

"Oh, nothing special," replied the captain evasively.

"Yes there is," retorted Tyke. "You can't fool me. So let's have it."

"Well, to tell you the truth," said Captain Hamilton, "I don't quite like the actions of the crew."

"No more do I," said Tyke calmly.

"Have you noticed it too?"

"I've still got a pair of pretty good eyes in my head. But heave ahead."

"Well, in the first place," said the captain, "it's about the worst set of swabs that ever called themselves sailors. Some of 'em don't seem to know

the spanker boom from the jib. Of course, that isn't true of all of 'em. Perhaps half of them are fairly good men. But the rest seem to be scum and riffraff."

"What did you ship the lubbers for?" asked Grimshaw.

"I didn't," answered Captain Hamilton. "I was so busy with other things that I left it to Ditty."

"An' there you left it to a good man!" Tyke said scornfully. "I've been keeping tabs on that Bug-eye, as they call him, since I come aboard. He's a bad actor, he is. Listen here, Cap'n Rufe——" and the old man, with a warning hand on Captain Hamilton's knee and in a low voice, repeated what he had told Drew in the hospital about the one-eyed man being at the scene of his accident.

"And was it Ditty?" gasped Captain Hamilton.

"Surest thing you know. An' I don't believe I dreamed he went through my pockets. What was that for, when he didn't rob me of my watch and cash?"

The master of the schooner shook his head thoughtfully, making no immediate reply.

"Ditty's a pretty good sailor himself, I notice," went on Tyke.

"None better," assented the captain.

"An' he knows a sailor when he sees one?" continued the old man.

"Of course he does," the captain affirmed. "And

that's what has seemed strange to me. He's often picked crews for me before, and I've never had to complain of his judgment."

"Well then," concluded Tyke, "it stands to reason that if he's shipped a lot of raffraff this time, instead of decent sailors, he'd a reason for it."

"It would seem so," admitted the captain uneasily.

"Have you put it up to him?" asked Tyke.

"I have. And he admits that some of the men are no good, but says that he was stuck. He left it to some boarding-house runners, and he says they put one over on him by bundling the worst of the gang aboard at the last minute."

"A mighty thin excuse," commented Tyke.

"Of course it is; and I raked Ditty fore and aft on account of it. I'm through with him after this cruise. I've only kept him on as long as I have because Mr. Parmalee wanted it so. But he finds another berth as soon as we reach New York."

"I've noticed him talking to some of the men a good deal," remarked Tyke.

"That's another thing that's worried me," said the captain. "Up to now, Ditty has always been a good bucko mate and has kept the men at a distance. Did you see the man I knocked down the other day when he started to give me some back talk?"

"Yes," grinned Tyke. "You made a neat job of

it. Couldn't have done it better myself in the old days."

"But the peculiar thing about it," continued the captain, "was that I had to do it although the mate was a good deal nearer to the fellow than I was. Ordinarily, Ditty would have put him on his back by the time he'd got out the second word. But this time he had paid no attention, and I had to do the job myself."

"Well, what do you make of it all?"

"I don't know what to make of it, and that's just what's troubling me. If I could only get to the bottom of it, I'd make short work of the mystery."

"How's your second officer, Rogers? Is he a man you can depend on?"

"He's true blue. A fine, straight fellow and a good sailor."

"That's good."

"I wish he were mate in place of Ditty," muttered the captain.

"Well, he ain't," replied Tyke. "An' to make any change jest now with nothing more'n you've got to go on, would put you in bad with the marine court. We'll jest keep our eyes peeled for the first sign of real trouble, and' if them skunks start to make any we'll be ready for 'em."

"I wonder what the matter is with Drew and Parmalee over there!" exclaimed the captain suddenly. "More trouble?"

Tyke followed the direction the captain indicated and was astonished to see that the young men seemed to be on the verge of an altercation. Their faces were flushed and their attitude almost threatening.

The captain hurried toward them, and Tyke hobbled after him as fast as he was able.

The tension between Parmalee and Drew had been slowly but steadily tightening. Little things, trifles in themselves, had increased it until they found it hard to be civil to each other. In the presence of Ruth and the two older men, they suppressed this feeling as much as possible; and except by Ruth it had been unsuspected.

The purest accident that afternoon had brought the matter to a crisis.

Ruth was detained below by some duty she had on hand, and Drew was pacing the deck while Parmalee, leaning on his cane, was standing near the rail looking out to sea.

As Drew passed the other, the ship lurched and his foot accidentally struck the cane, which flew out of Parmalee's hand. Deprived of the support on which he relied, the latter staggered and almost lost his balance. He saved himself by clutching at the rail. Then he turned about with an angry exclamation.

Drew stooped instantly and picked up the cane, which he held out to Parmalee.

"I'm sorry," he said. "It was an awkward accident."

"Awkward, sure enough," sneered Parmalee. "As to it's being an accident——" He paused suggestively.

Drew stepped nearer to him, his eyes blazing.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "Do you intimate that I did it purposely?"

Parmalee regretted the ungenerous sneer as soon as he spoke. But his blood was up, and before Drew's menacing attitude he would not retract.

"You can put any construction on it that you please," he flared.

Just then Tyke and the captain came hurrying up.

"Come, come, boys," said the captain soothingly, "keep cool."

"What's the trouble with you two young roosters?" queried Tyke.

They looked a little sheepish.

"Just a little misundersanding," muttered Drew.

"I fear it was my fault," admitted Parmalee. "Mr. Drew accidentally knocked my cane out of my hand, and I flew off at a tangent and was nasty about it when he apologized."

"Nothing mor'n that?" said Tyke, with relief. "You young fire-eaters shouldn't have such hair-trigger tempers."

"Shake hands now and forget it," admonished the captain genially.

The young men did so, both being ashamed of having lost control of themselves. But there was no cordiality in the clasp, and Tyke's keen sense divined that something more serious than a trivial happening like the cane incident lay between the two.

Tyke had never seen the French motto: *"Cherchez la femme,"* and could not have translated it if he had. But he had seen enough of trouble between men, especially young men, to know that in nine cases out of ten a woman was at the bottom of it. He thought instantly of Ruth.

He decided to have a serious talk with Drew at the earliest opportunity. But as he looked about, after the young men had departed, he saw signs of a change in the weather that in a moment drove all other thoughts out of his head. He limped into the cabin companionway to look at the barometer.

"Jumping Jehoshaphat!" he shouted, "we're going to ketch it sure! She's down to twenty-nine an' still a-dropping!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE STORM BREAKS

Tyke was not the only one who had noted the falling barometer. Captain Hamilton was already standing at the foot of the mainmast, shouting orders that were taken up by Ditty and Rogers and carried on to the men.

To the north, great masses of leaden-gray clouds were heaped up against the sky. The sea was as flat as though a giant roller had passed over it. A curious stillness prevailed—the wind seemed hushed, holding its breath before the tempest burst.

The hatches were battened down and the storm slides put on the companionway. Most of the sails were reefed close, and with everything snug alow and aloft, the *Bertha Hamilton* awaited the coming storm.

This wait was not long. A streak of white appeared along the sea line, and this drove nearer with frightful rapidity. With a pandemonium of sound, the tempest was upon them. The spars bent, groaning beneath the strain, and the stays grew as taut as bowstrings. The schooner careened until her copper sheathing showed red against the green and white of the foaming waves.

The screaming of the wind was deafening. Hundreds of tons of water crashed against the schooner's sides and poured over her stern. The sea clawed at her hull as though to tear it in pieces. Tatters of foam and spindrift swept over the deck and dashed as high as the topgallant yards. The spray was blinding and hid one end of the craft from the other.

Staggering under the repeated pounding of the tumbling, churning waves that shook her from stem to stern, the *Bertha Hamilton* plunged on, her bow at times buried in the surges, her spars creaking and groaning, but holding gallantly.

Ruth had been ordered by her father to go below, and he had advised Parmalee and Drew to do the same. But the fascination of the storm had been too much for the young men to resist, and they crouched in the shelter of the lee side of the deckhouse, holding on tightly while they watched the unchained fury of the waters. As for Tyke, he was in his element, and nothing could have induced him to leave the deck.

For nearly twenty-four hours the storm continued, although its chief fury was spent before the following morning. But the billows still ran high, and it was evening before the topsails could be set. Later on, as the wind subsided, the schooner, having shown her mettle, settled once more into her stride and flew along like a ghost.

Then, for the first time since the storm had begun, the captain laid aside his oil-skins and relaxed.

"That was a fierce blow," chuckled Tyke. "A little more and you might have called it a hurricane."

"It was a teaser," asserted the captain. "Did you see how the old girl came through it? Never lost a brace or started a seam. Hardly a drop of water in the hold. Didn't I tell you she was a sweet sailer, either in fair weather or foul? But the crew! Holy mackerel! what a gang of lubbers."

"You're right to be proud of the craft," assented Tyke. "Has it taken her much out of her course?"

"A bit to the north, but nothing more. For that matter, we've passed Martinique. I figure it out that we may raise the hump-backed island tomorrow, if we have luck."

A feeling of relief was experienced by the rest of the after-guard when at last the danger was past, and it was a happy, if tired, party that gathered about the captain's table that evening.

Supper over, they went on deck. The tropical night had fallen. There was no moon, and a velvety blackness stretched about the ship on every side, broken here and there by a faint phosphorescent gleam as a wave reared and broke.

The schooner still rose and plunged from the aftermath of the storm, and the slipperiness of the wet decks made the footing insecure. The captain

was fearful that Ruth might have a fall, and after a while urged her to go below. Drew and Parmalee offered to accompany her, but she was very tired after the excitement and sleeplessness of the previous night, and excused herself on the plea that she thought she would retire early.

Drew and Parmalee were standing near each other just abaft the mizzenmast, while Tyke and the captain were aft, talking in low voices.

An unusually big wave struck the schooner a resounding slap on the starboard quarter, causing her to lurch suddenly. Drew was thrown off his balance. He tried to regain his footing, but the slippery deck was treacherous and he fell heavily, striking his head on the corner of the hatch cover.

How long he lay there he did not know, but it must have been for several minutes, for when he recovered consciousness his clothes were wet where they had absorbed the moisture from the deck. His head was whirling, and he felt giddy and confused. He put his hand to his forehead and felt a cut that was bleeding profusely.

Drew had a horror of scenes, and instead of reporting to Tyke or to the captain, he resolved to go quietly to his room, bind up the wound as well as he was able, and then get into his berth with the hope that a good night's rest would put him in good shape again.

He wondered in a dazed way where Parmalee

was. Why had not the other young man sought to help him? He had been standing close by at the time and could not have failed to notice the accident. Was it possible that Parmalee still nourished a grudge, and had refused the slight service that humanity should have dictated? No, Parmalee was not that kind. There was no love lost between the two, but Drew refused to do him that injustice.

But Drew's wound demanded attention, and he was too confused just then to solve problems that could wait till later. So he picked his way rather unsteadily to the companionway and went down.

He had to pass the captain's cabin on his way to his own room. As he did so, the light streamed full upon him, and Ruth, who had not yet gone to her own room, looked up from her sewing and saw him. She gave a little scream and rushed toward him.

"Oh, Allen, Allen!" she cried, taking his face in her hands. "What has happened? Your head is bleeding! Are you badly hurt?"

"Don't be frightened, Ruth," he returned. "I was stupid enough to fall and cut my head a little. Bu it's nothing of any account. I'll bind it up and I'll be as right as a trivet in the morning."

"*You'll* bind it up!" she exclaimed. "You'll do nothing of the kind. You'll come right in here and let me fix that poor head for you."

She drew him in and he went unresistingly, glad to yield to her gentle tyranny.

Ruth found warm water, ointment, lint and bandages, and deftly bound up the wound. She was a sailor's daughter, and an adept in first aid to the wounded. Her soft hands touched his face and head, her eyes were dewy with sympathy, and Drew found himself rejoicing at the accident that had brought him this boon. She had never been so close to him before, and he was sorry when the operation was ended.

"Through so soon?" he asked regretfully.

She laughed merrily. She could laugh now.

"I can take the bandage off and start all over again if you say so," she said mischievously.

"Do," he begged.

"Be sensible," she commanded. "Go at once now and get to bed. Remember, you're my patient and must obey orders."

She shook her finger at him and tried to frown with portentous severity. But the dancing eyes and mutinous dimple belied the frown.

"If you're my nurse," I'm going to be sick for a long time," he warned her.

He tried to grasp the menacing finger, but she eluded him and playfully drove him out of the room.

The sun was shining brightly through the porthole of his room when he awoke the next morning,

and on reaching for his watch he found that he had waked later than usual. He dressed himself quickly. He felt a little light-headed from the effect of his wound, but nothing more.

There was an exclamation of alarm from Tyke and the captain when they saw his bandaged head.

"Only a cut," said Allen lightly. And he briefly narrated the details of his misadventure.

"Lucky it was no worse," commented Tyke.

"Wasn't there any one near by at that time?" asked the captain.

"Why——" began Drew, and stopped. To say that Parmalee had been near him would have been an indictment of the former for his seeming heartlessness. He did not want to take advantage of his absent rival.

"If there had been, he'd have certainly picked me up," he evaded, rather lamely.

Ruth greeted him in her usual gay and gracious manner, but he sought in vain for any trace of the tenderness of the night before. She was on her guard again.

"How is my patient this morning?" she smiled.

"Fine," he answered. "If you ever want any recommendation as a nurse you can refer to me. Only I wouldn't give it," he added.

"Why not?" she asked.

"Because I want to be your only patient."

She hastened to get off perilous ground.

"I wonder what's keeping Mr. Parmalee this morning," she observed. "He's even more of a sleepy head than you are."

"Tired out, I guess," conjectured the captain. "This storm has used us all up pretty well."

Ruth summoned Namco and told him to knock on Mr. Parmalee's door. The Japanese was back in a minute.

"Honorable gent no ansler," he reported.

"That's queer," remarked the captain. "I'll step there myself."

He returned promptly, looking very grave. "He isn't there," he announced.

"Perhaps he's gone on deck to get an appetite for breakfast," suggested Drew lightly.

"It's not alone that he's absent," said the captain in a worried tone. "His bed hasn't been slept in!"

There was a chorus of startled exclamations. Drew and Tyke jumped to their feet and Ruth lost her color.

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried, "it can't be that anything's happened to him?"

"Don't get excited, Ruth," said her father soothingly. "There may be some explanation. I'll have the ship searched at once."

They all hurried on deck, and the captain summoned the mate and Mr. Rogers. He told them what he feared and ordered that the ship be searched thoroughly.

Rogers turned to obey, but the one-eyed mate, Cal Ditty, stopped him with a gesture.

"No use," he said. "Mr. Parmalee ain't here."

"How do you know?" cried the captain.

"Because he was thrown overboard last night," was the sudden grim answer.

Ruth gave a smothered shriek and the others gasped in amazement and horror.

"What do you mean?" shouted the captain.

"Just what I said."

"Who threw him overboard?"

"He did," declared Ditty, pointing to Drew.

There was a moment of terrible silence as the others looked in the direction of the mate's pointing finger.

Drew stood as though he were turned to stone. His tongue was paralyzed. He saw consternation in the faces of Tyke and the captain. He glimpsed the horror in the eyes of Ruth. Then, with a roar of rage, he hurled himself at the one-eyed mate.

"You lying hound!" he shouted. "If crime's been done, *you've* committed it."

Ditty slid back a step and met the younger man's charge with a coolness that showed his taunt had been premeditated and that this result was expected. As the enraged Drew closed in, the mate met him with a frightful swing to the side of his bandaged head.

Drew's head rocked on his shoulders, and for a

moment he was dazed. Blood flowed from under the bandage, and in an instant his cheek and neck were besmeared with it. The bucko, with the experience of long years of rough fighting, landed a second blow before the confused Drew could put up his defense again.

But that was the last blow Ditty did land. Drew's brain cleared suddenly. Hot rage filled his heart. He forgot his surroundings. He forgot that Ruth stood by to see his metamorphosis from a civilized man into an uncivilized one. He forgot everything but the leering face of the lying scoundrel before him, and he proceeded to change that face into a bruised mask.

His skill and speed made the mate, with only brute force behind him, seem like a child. Drew closed Ditty's remaining eye, split his upper lip, puffed both his cheeks till his nose was scarcely a ridge between them, and ended by landing a left hook on the point of the jaw that knocked the mate down and out.

As Drew fell back from the fray, which had lasted only seconds, so swift was the pace, Tyke seized him.

"You've done enough, boy! You've done enough, Allen!" he exclaimed. "Leave life in the scoundrel so we can get the truth out of him."

CHAPTER XVIII

A SEA COURT

"Mr. Rogers, take the deck!" commanded Captain Hamilton sharply. "You bullies, get forward with you!" he added to the curious men of the watch. "Don't any of you lose sight of the fact that if it were a seaman instead of a passenger who attacked Mr. Ditty, he'd be in the chain-locker now.

"Drew, you and Tyke come below with me. When you've washed your face, Mr. Ditty, I want to see you there too. Mr. Rogers!"

"Aye, aye, sir!" responded the second officer. smartly.

"Pass the word forward. Has anybody seen Mr. Parmalee or does any of them know personally what's happened to him? No second-hand tales, mind you."

"Aye, aye, sir."

With all his rage and confusion of mind, Drew realized that easy-going, peace-loving Captain Hamilton had suddenly become another and entirely different being.

Even Ruth descried no softness in her father's countenace now. She noted that his eye sparkled dangerously. He waved her before him, and she

fled down the companionway steps ahead of Drew and Grimshaw.

"Now, what's all this about?" the master of the *Bertha Hamilton* demanded, facing Drew across the cabin table.

"Oh, Father!" gasped Ruth. "That—that—— Mr. Ditty says Mr. Parmalee is murdered and that Allen did it!"

"That's neither here nor there," said the captain sternly. "I don't believe that any more than you do. But what is this between Ditty and Mr. Drew? They went at each other like two bulldogs that have nursed a grudge for a year.

"Now, I want to know what it means, Drew. I heard—Ruth told me—of the little run-in you had with Ditty the day you first met my daughter on the Jones Lane pier," pursued Captain Hamilton. "Ruth was carrying a letter to Captain Peters for me. The *Normandy* is bound for Hong Kong, where I'd just come from, and Peters and I have mutual friends out there. I forgot something I wanted Ruth to tell Captain Peters, and I asked Ditty, who had shore leave, to waylay her and give her my message. She'd never seen Ditty, and he startled her. He isn't a beauty, I admit. But now, what happened after that between you two, Drew?"

"Nothing at all that day," said the young man promptly. "But another day I was over there, at the *Normandy,* to see—er—Captain Peters, and

this fellow showed up half drunk and gave me the dirty side of his tongue. I knocked him down."

"Seems to me you're mighty sudden with your fists," growled Captain Hamilton.

"And Mr. Grimshaw can tell you something about Ditty, too," Drew began; but the master of the schooner stopped him.

"Never mind about that. We're discussing your affair with Ditty. I've got to judge between you two. I'm judge, jury, and hangman in this case—until we make some port where there's a consul, at least. Now, here's the mate. No more fighting, remember or I'll take a hand in it myself."

The battered Ditty stumbled down the cabin steps. He could scarcely see out of his single eye; but that eye glittered malevolently when it fell upon Allen Drew.

"Sit down, Mr. Ditty," said the captain evenly. "We've got to get to the bottom of this business. You've said something, Mr. Ditty, that's got to go down on the log—and it's going to make you a peck of trouble if you don't prove it. You understand that?"

"I know it," snarled Ditty, through his puffed lips. "He done it."

"You lying hound!" muttered Drew.

Captain Hamilton ignored this. He said:

"What makes you say that Mr. Drew flung Mr. Parmalee overboard?"

"Because I seen him do it," answered Ditty.

Drew started for the mate again, but Tyke held him back.

"Go ahead, Mr. Ditty. Tell your story," commanded the captain curtly.

"They was both standin' abaft the mizzen," the mate began, "and I heard 'em quarrelin' about something. I went there, thinkin' to stop 'em if it was anything serious, and jest as I got near 'em I seen Mr. Parmalee up and hit Mr. Drew on the head with his cane. Then, before you could say Jack Robinson, Mr. Drew picked up Mr. Parmalee as if he had been a baby and threw him over the rail."

There was a stifled murmur from the group.

"Why didn't you give the alarm and lower a boat?" asked the captain.

"I was goin' to, but Mr. Drew turned round and saw me. He whipped a gun out of his pocket and swore he'd shoot me if I gave the alarm or said a word. He held me under the point of his gun till it was too late to lower a boat, and only let me go after I promised him I'd keep mum about the hull thing."

"You're a fine sailorman," charged the captain bitterly, "to let a man drown without doing anything to help him! Why didn't you take a chance?"

"He had the drop on me," mumbled the mate.

The captain turned to Drew.

"What about it?" he asked.

"Do I have to deny such a yarn?" the young man burst out hotly. "What can I say except that this infernal scoundrel is lying? The whole ridiculous story is as new to me as it is to you. The last time I saw Mr. Parmalee was when he was standing beside me on the deck last night. I never laid a finger on him!"

"Where were you standing?" asked the captain.

"Just where Ditty says I was," replied Drew frankly. "That part of the story is true. And it's the only thing in it that is true."

"Did you have any unfriendly words with Mr. Parmalee?"

"Not a word," was the answer.

"Ask him if he ever had any quarrel with him afore that," snarled the mate.

"I know all about that," replied the captain sharply. "I was there myself. It was just a little misundersanding, and it blew over in a minute."

"Ev'ry one on board knows there was bad blood 'twixt 'em," put in the mate, "and they come pretty nigh to guessin' the reason for it, too," he added with a leering glance at Ruth.

"Stop, you dog!" shouted the captain in sudden rage. "If you say another word along that line I'll knock you down!"

The mate took a step backward, and mumbled an apology.

"Go on, Drew," ordered the captain. "When did you lose sight of Mr. Parmalee?"

"I slipped on the deck and struck my head on the corner of the hatch-cover. Mr. Parmalee was with me at the time. I lost my senses from the blow, and when I came to, Parmalee wasn't there. I remember thinking it strange that he hadn't helped me when I fell, but I was dizzy and confused and soon forgot about it. If I thought of him at all, it was to suppose that he had gone to his room. I fully expected to see him at the breakfast table this morning, and I was as much surprised as you were when he didn't turn up."

His story was told so frankly and simply that it carried conviction. But Ditty still had a card up his sleeve. He went over to the open companion-way.

"Give me that cane, Bill," he called to a sailor standing at a little distance.

The man obeyed, and a thrill went through the group as they recognized it as having belonged to Lester Parmalee. Ruth was making a strong effort for self-control.

"Look at the blood-stains on this cane," said Ditty triumphantly, as he handed it over to the captain.

There were, in truth, dark red stains on the end of the cane, standing out clearly in contrast with the light oak color of the stick itself.

"That's where the cut on Mr. Drew's head come from, jest as I says," proclaimed Ditty.

"And what's more," he went on, "there ain't any blood on the edge of the hatch cover."

"No, there wouldn't be," muttered Tyke, "for the deck was washed down this morning, of course."

"Do you own a pistol, Drew?" asked Captain Hamilton, after a painful pause.

"Yes," admitted the accused man. "I have an automatic. It's in my stateroom now. But I haven't carried it since I came on board the ship. I didn't have it on me last night."

The captain mused for a moment in evident perplexity.

"Well," he said, rising to his feet, "that's all Mr. Ditty. I'll think this over and figure out what it's best to do."

"Ain't you goin' to put him in irons?" asked the mate truculently.

"That's none of your business," snapped the master of the schooner. "I'm captain of this craft, and I'll do as I think best. You are relieved from duty for the present. Lord man! but you're a sight."

Ditty wavered as though some impudent reply were forming on his tongue; but he thought better of it beneath the steady gaze of the captain's eyes and turned to go. He could not, however, forbear a parting shot.

"You can see from the way he went at me what a savage temper he's got," he said. "He'd 've killed me if he could 've. And if he'd do that to me for what I said, what would 've stopped his doin' it to a man who had already hit him?"

"That'll do, Mr. Ditty!" snapped the captain again.

Tyke left no doubt as to where he stood. Out of respect for the captain, he had left the inquiry entirely in his hands, but now he hobbled over to Drew and clapped him vigorously on the shoulder.

"Brace up, my boy!" he exclaimed. "I don't know jest what the motive of that swab is, but I know he was lying from first to last." Ruth was sobbing, and could not speak, but her little hand stole into the young man's, and he grasped it convulsively.

"I can't believe that you did it either, Drew," declared the captain; but there was a lack of heartiness in his tone that Drew was quick to detect. "I'll have to look into the whole matter as carefully as I know how. Parmalee's disappearance must be accounted for. All we know now is that he isn't to be found. I'll have the ship searched, but I have little doubt but the poor fellow has gone overboard. In itself that doesn't prove anything. He may have fallen over. But we can't get away from the fact that one man *says* he knows how Parmalee came to his death. He may be lying.

I think he is. I hope to God he is. But the whole matter will have to be taken up by the proper authorities as soon as we get back to New York."

Drew's brain reeled. He saw himself in a court of justice, on trial for his life, charged with a horrible crime that he had no means of refuting, except by his own unsupported denial. And even if he were acquitted, the black cloud of suspicion would hang over him forever.

"But I'm going to believe you're innocent until I'm forced to believe the contrary," continued the captain; "and God help Ditty if I find he's been lying!"

"He *is* lying," protested Drew passionately. "I never dreamed of injurying Parmalee. Did I act like a murderer last night when you bound up my head, Ruth?"

"No! no!" sobbed the girl.

"Did I act like a murderer at the table this morning?" Drew continued, conscious that he was proving nothing, but clutching eagerly at every straw.

"You're no more a murderer than I am!" almost shouted Tyke, moved to the depth by Drew's distress.

"You're going to have the benefit of every doubt, my boy," the captain assured him soothingly. "But now you'd better go to your room and try to pull yourself together. We're all upset, and talking

won't do us any good until we've got something else to go on. But you have got to promise me that you'll leave Ditty alone."

"I'll leave him alone if he leaves me alone."

"That is all I ask. I'll warn him to keep away from you."

Drew released Ruth's hand. She threw herself on her father's breast, and the young man groped his way to his room. Once there, he sat down and tried to face calmly the terrible indictment that had been made against him.

He did not delude himself as to the bits of circumstantial evidence that might be used to piece out that indictment to make it plausible.

What was Ditty's motive? He racked his brain in vain to find it. There was, to be sure, the row upon the pier, but that had been only a trifle, and the world would never believe that for anything like that a man would swear away the life of another.

The previous quarrel between him and Lester Parmalee seemed to establish the fact that there was bad blood between them. There was the cut upon his head, received at the very time that Parmalee disappeared. There were the blood stains on the cane, carrying the inference that that stick in the hand of Parmalee had inflicted his wound. He owned a revolver, which would bear out Ditty's statement that the mate had been intimidated by it.

Then there was his own savage attack on Ditty, which showed his hot and impetuous temper.

He groaned as he saw what could be made of all these things in the hands of a clever district attorney. He could see the picture that would be drawn for the benefit of the jury. The old, old story—a beautiful woman with two young and ardent suitors; one quarrel already having occurred; a meeting in the dark; a renewal of the quarrel; an attack by the weaker with a cane; the blow that turned the stronger into a maddened beast and prompted him to grasp his frail rival and throw him into the sea. What was more possible? What was more probable? Jealousy had caused thousands of similar tragedies in the history of the world.

And when to these damaging circumstances was added the testimony of a declared eye-witness who seemed to have no sufficient reason for lying, what would the jury do?

Drew shuddered, and his soul turned sick within him.

And Ruth! He ground his teeth in rage at the thought of her name being dragged into the terrible story, as it certainly would be.

Even supposing that he should be given the benefit of the doubt and discharged, his life would be utterly wrecked. He could not ask her to share the life of a man who the world would believe owed his escape from the penitentiary to luck rather than

to his innocence. Even if she were willing, he could not ask her to link her life with his.

All through that day and part of the next, he lived in an inferno. By tacit consent, the members of the party refrained from talking of the one thing about which all were thinking. When they met, they spoke of indifferent matters, but there was a hideous feeling of restraint that could not be dispelled, and gloom hung over them like a pall.

The morning of the second day, as they were cruising about in the longitude and latitude indicated by the map, the voice of the lookout resounded from the masthead.

"Land ho!"

"Where away?" shouted Rogers, who chanced to be officer of the deck.

"Three points on the weather bow," was the answer.

Rogers reported instantly to the captain, who came rushing on deck, followed by the other members of the party.

The captain adjusted his binoculars and looked hard and long at a black speck rising from the waves. Finally he dropped the glass.

"The hump of the whale!" he announced.

CHAPTER XIX

FOREBODINGS

THE hearts of all on board were thrilled. Crew and passengers alike were delighted, although the latter had a special reason for excitement of which the former were supposed to be ignorant.

The schooner had been proceeding under full sail, but as she approached nearer to the land whose outlines at every moment became more distinct, the topgallants were taken in until the *Bertha Hamilton* had just enough canvas drawing to give her good steerage way.

Before long the schooner approached near enough for those on board to see the island plainly with the naked eye. It seemed to be several miles in length. It looked like an emerald floating in the sunlight. Lush vegetation extended to within a hundred yards of the sea, and a silvery stretch of beach edged the breakers that curled and burst with an unceasing roar.

There was no sign of human habitation anywhere. No hut broke the smooth expanse of the beach or peeped out from among the trees. The impression of an uninhabited wilderness was heightened by great numbers of pelicans and cranes,

who stood sleepily on one foot or stalked solemnly about pursuing their fishing in the shallows.

There was only one place where the outline of the coast was broken. At the eastern end the claws of a reef extended for about half a mile into the sea, making a barrier behind which the water was comparatively calm, though at the opening, of about two hundred yards, there ran a turbulent sea.

"That must be the inlet shown on the pirate's map," whispered Tyke, who was standing at the rail of the *Bertha Hamilton* close beside the captain.

"That's probably what it is," replied Captain Hamilton, his voice showing the agitation under which he was laboring. "But before we put her through the opening, I'm going to take soundings. Mr. Ditty!" he called, "heave to and lower a boat to take soundings."

"Aye, aye, sir," responded the mate.

In a twinkling the necessary orders were given, the *Bertha Hamilton* lost way and rounded to, and a boat manned by six sailors was dropped from the davits on the lee side.

"Pull away smartly now, my lads," called the mate as he took the tiller-ropes.

It required smart seamanship to get through that rushing raceway without capsizing; but, whatever Ditty's faults, he did not lack ability, and the work was done in a way that elicited an unwilling grunt of admiration from Tyke.

In less than two hours the requisite soundings had been taken, and Ditty came to report.

"Plenty of depth, sir," he reported. "No less than ten fathoms anywhere. And a good bottom."

"All right, Mr. Ditty," replied the captain. "Put the canvas on her now and we'll take her through."

The captain himself assumed charge of this critical operation, and under half sail the *Bertha Hamilton* dashed through as though welcoming the end of her journey. She made the channel without mishap, and let go her anchor within a quarter of a mile of the head of the lagoon.

Inside the breakwater the sea was almost as smooth as a mirror. The water was wonderfully transparent, and they could see hundreds of tropical fish swimming lazily at a great depth. On the beach the waves lapped in musical ripples, in striking contrast to the thundering surf on the reef.

The captain wiped his perspiring forehead and drew a long breath of relief. "So far so good," he remarked. "It won't be long now before we'll know whether we've come on a fool's errand or not."

"There's one thing about which the map hasn't lied, anyway," said Drew. "It pointed out the inlet just where we found it. That's a good omen, it seems to me."

"Let's hope the rest of the map is all right," replied the captain. "But it's nearly time for din-

ner now, and we'll have that before going ashore."

All were so feverishly impatient, now that they were almost in sight of their goal, that none of them paid much attention to the meal, and it was soon over.

"Do you s'pose the crew have any idee why we're stopping at this island?" asked Tyke. There was a grim look on his seamed countenance, and both the captain and Drew looked at him curiously.

"What's milling in your brain, Tyke?" asked Captain Hamilton. "I've kept my eyes peeled, and I swear I haven't seen anything more to suggest treachery. Ditty's on his best behavior——"

"Yes; that's so," agreed Tyke. "But did you spy the men he took with him in the boat jest now, when he came in here to make soundings?"

"I didn't notice," the captain confessed.

"The orneriest ones of the whole bunch. An', believe me! this is the wo'st crew of dock scrapings I ever set eyes on," growled Tyke. "Ditty did a lot of talking in the boat—I watched 'em through my glass. Them six are his close friends, Cap'n Rufe. They've laid their plans——"

"Holy mackerel!" exclaimed Captain Hamilton. "What are you saying, Tyke?"

"I've figgered out that we aren't going to have things our own way down here," the other said earnestly. "I've been waiting for you to say something, Cap'n Rufe, ever since that Bug-eye accused

Allen like he did. Ditty's on to our game—has been on to it right along—an' he selected this crew of wharf-rats for a purpose."

"I agree with you, Mr. Grimshaw," Drew declared eagerly. "That's what Ditty was after when he tried to rob you at the time you were knocked down by the automobile. You were right. He did push you back in front of the machine, and then he searched your pockets while you were on the ground."

"For what?" demanded Captain Hamilton, staring.

"For the paper and the map. Ditty believed Mr. Grimshaw carried that confession in his pocket," Drew replied.

The master of the schooner rose and began to walk about in excitement.

"That's it! He was lurking outside your office door that day, Tyke, when we first found the papers in Manuel Gomez's chest. I see it now. He was aboard the schooner that very evening, too, when I told Ruth at dinner about the pirate's doubloons. He might have been eavesdropping then."

"An' I bet he flung poor Parmalee over the rail himself," said Tyke. Hamilton's expression changed and he shook his head at that.

"He'd git rid of one of the after-guard that way," urged Tyke. "Parmalee could shoot. An' if it comes to a fight——"

"My soul!" groaned Captain Hamilton suddenly. "And Ruth with us!"

"What about Ruth?" asked that young lady cheerfully, coming from her cabin. "Aren't you all ready yet? I am going ashore with you."

"Yes; you'd better come," said her father gloomily.

"Why, what is the matter?" she demanded.

"We were just wondering," said Drew quickly, assuming a casual tone to cover their real emotion, "if the crew suspected our reason for touching at this island."

Captain Hamilton picked up the ball at once.

"But I don't believe they do," he said. "Of course, it would have seemed strange to the mate and to Rogers if I hadn't given them some explanation, especially as we came out in ballast. So I dropped hints that we were out on a survey expedition that couldn't be talked of just now. They probably have the idea that we're looking up a suitable coaling station for the Government, or something of that kind. To carry that out, I've got some surveyor's instruments here that we'll take along with us, just for a blind."

"Let's hope it'll work," said Tyke dubiously. "An' it won't do any harm to take our guns along."

"There's a pair of revolvers for each of us," replied Captain Hamilton, opening the closet where

he kept the arms that Drew had previously seen; "and we'll take half a dozen guns along with us in the boat. There may be snakes or wild animals on the islands."

"I must have a revolver too, Daddy," said the girl.

"Of course, my dear," agreed the captain.

"Mebbe you'd better not put any cartridges in it, Cap'n Rufe," said Grimshaw, taking Ruth playfully by the arm. "They'd be more dangerous to us than to anything else."

"It's mean of you to say that, Mr. Grimshaw," pouted Ruth. "You'll find that I can use a gun as well as anybody."

"Mebbe so, mebbe so, my dear," said Tyke indulgently.

"Hadn't we better take some provisions along?" asked Ruth, as she slipped the cartridges into her revolver and put the weapon in the pocket of the sports skirt that she had donned.

"That won't be necessary," replied the captain. "We'll be back before nightfall. This is just a little preliminary scouting. We won't have time for more than that this afternoon. The real work of searching for the treasure will begin to-morrow."

The preparations finished, the party went on deck.

"Crew had their dinner yet, Mr. Ditty?" Captain Hamilton asked of his first officer."

"My watch have, sir," was the answer. "The others are eating now."

"Pick out half a dozen men and lower the boat," ordered the captain. "We're going ashore for a few hours. We'll be back for supper."

"How long will we lay up here, sir?"

"Can't tell yet. Perhaps two or three days. Possibly a week or more."

"How about shore leave for the men, sir?"

"Beginning to-morrow, they can go ashore in batches of ten. This afternoon, Mr. Rogers and a boat's crew can take the long boat and some casks and go ashore to look for water."

"Very well, sir," replied the mate, with a curious expression on his face.

As he turned away, his one eye fell on Drew. They had not met since the fight two days before. They stared at each other for several seconds, until Ditty's eye fell before the concentrated fury in those of the young man.

Ruth, who had witnessed the interchange of looks, put her hand lightly on Drew's arm.

"Aren't you going to help me into the boat, Allen?" she asked.

His rage at Ditty vanished in an instant as he turned to her. She was trying to smile, but there was no laughter in her dewy eyes. But Drew saw there something deeper and sweeter and tenderer. There was immense sympathy and—what was that

other fugitive expression that he caught before her eyelids lowered?

He bent toward her, but just then Grimshaw and the captain ranged alongside, and they had to take their places in the boat.

The members of the crew who had been told off for the service, bent to the oars, and, at a rapid pace, they approached the shore. The beach shelved gradually, and they had no trouble in making a landing. The sailors leaped out into the shallow water and drew the boat well up on the strand, and the party disembarked.

Drew wished that they had found it necessary to wade. With what delight he would have carried Ruth in those strong arms of his!

"We'll be back in an hour or two, my lads," said the captain. "You can scatter about and do as you like until we return, as long as you keep within hail of the boat."

With the captain and Tyke in the lead, and Drew following behind to help Ruth over the hard places, they plunged into the unknown forest. After all, they went slowly, for Tyke had to favor what he called his "game leg."

For all the evidence that the wood afforded, it had been untrodden for many years. Giant ceiba trees reared themselves two hundred feet into the air. Lianas hung in festoons from the boughs like monstrous boa constrictors. Parrots flew squawk-

ing from branch to branch, and humming birds and butterflies of many hues and gorgeous beauty darted like bright arrows among the flowers.

The underbrush was thick and in some places impenetrable, and the treasure seekers would have found their progress very slow if it had not been for certain irregular trails that seemed to have been hewn through the woods at intervals. In some places these trails were many yards wide, while at others they narrowed to a foot or two. Nothing grew upon them, but they were covered by dead leaves and twigs of varying depths.

"Wonder how these trails came here," said the captain. "There are no footprints on them, and yet they must have been made by animals or men."

"Better keep our eyes peeled," warned Tyke.

The captain, who had scraped away some of the accumulated leaves and rubbish, gave a sudden exclamation.

"Why, this path is made of stone!" he cried. He dropped on his knees and examined more closely. When he rose to his feet his face was grave.

"It's lava!" he stated.

"Then the island must be volcanic!" exclaimed Drew, startled by the thought.

"Nothing very surprising about that when you come to think of it," Tyke declared. "We're right down here in the earthquake zone, where the earth's liable to throw a fit any time. Like enough

this old whaleback is a sleeping volcano. She may blow up again some time."

"Just as it did at Martinique," confirmed the captain. "Perhaps that may explain the absence of people hereabouts. They may have all been wiped out by some eruption, or they may have been so scared that they left the island for safer quarters."

"I don't think we have much to worry about," remarked Tyke. "There ain't any doubt but this hill we're heading for has been at some time a volcano. But likely it's been quiet for hundreds of years. An' it's not likely that it's going to git busy now jest for our special benefit. Let's hike along."

"There's one good thing about it, anyway," remarked Drew, as they resumed their march. "It's burned out these paths and made the walking easier. And it's pointed out just the way we want to go. All we have to do is to follow this path and it can't help but lead us right up to the whale's hump."

"That's the point we want to head for," replied the captain, consulting the map. "You'll notice that these circles seem to be on the slope of the hill not so very far from the top. Besides, that pirate fellow would be likely to go quite a way in from the shore to bury his loot."

Half a mile further on, a little stream ran through the forest. The party went over to it, and Drew, bending down and making a cup of his

hands, bore some of the water to his lips. He made a wry face and almost choked.

"Sulphur!" he exclaimed. "It's full of it."

Captain Hamilton, too, tasted.

"Another proof, if we needed it, that the island is volcanic," he observed. Then, in a tone that only Drew heard, he added: "What I don't like about it is that it shows there's brimstone in the old whale's hump yet. If there wasn't, the water would have sweetened long ago."

Tyke and Ruth each took a few drops of the water, and then the party went on a little more soberly than before. The trees soon became more scattered, though the undergrowth was dense. Before long they emerged on a sort of plateau above which was lifted, at a height of two hundred feet or more, the whale's hump.

Its sides were heaped with masses of hardened lava in all kinds of grotesque shapes. It was utterly desolate and bare. Ruth shuddered as she looked at the weird scene.

"I don't wonder that some place around here is called the Witch's Head," she remarked. "This must be like the place where Macbeth saw the witches brewing their potions."

"Except that they brewed them 'in lightning, thunder and in rain'," said Drew. "Those are the only things that are missing."

He had scarcely spoken when there was a rum-

bling that sounded like thunder. Drew was startled, and Ruth grew slightly pale.

"That's funny," remarked Tyke. "Weather's as clear as a bell too. This ain't the hurricane season."

The captain was in a brown study, seemingly unheedful of the rumbling sound. In a moment he roused himself and said:

"Well, now let's scatter about and see if we can find anything that looks like The Three Sisters or the Witch's Head."

Grimshaw sat down to rest, not wishing to put too heavy a strain on the leg that had been injured, and the others wandered about for half an hour trying to discover anything that might be identified as the places named on the map. But their efforts were fruitless, and the captain, looking at his watch, called a halt.

"Nothing more doing now," he said. "We have only time to get back to the boat. But we've got our bearings and have done a good afternoon's work. To-morrow's a new day, and we'll get on the job early."

Reluctantly, the little party went back to the boat. They found the crew waiting for them and were pulled rapidly to the schooner, whose anchor lights were already gleaming like fireflies in the sudden dusk.

CHAPTER XX

THE EARTH TREMBLES

It was with a feeling of relief after their surroundings of the last few hours, that the treasure seekers found themselves again on board the *Bertha Hamilton* and seated in the bright cabin at the appetizing and abundant meal that Wah Lee had prepared for them.

All four felt jubilant at the discoveries they had made. Drew and Ruth were sure that they were on the very brink of finding the pirate hoard, and might, that very afternoon, have uncovered it if they had had a few more hours of daylight. Tomorrow, they felt sure, would find them in possession of the doubloons.

Drew's personal trouble had been for the moment obscured, although the thought of it was sure to return to torment him as soon as the excitement of the afternoon's search was past.

One thing served to delight and to torture him at the same time. He was almost sure that he had surprised a secret in the eyes of Ruth. He was thrilled as he thought of it. But the next moment he groaned in anguish as he remembered the frightful charge hanging over his head. What had he now to offer her but a wrecked career and a blackened name?

The exhilaration all had felt on their return was followed soon by reaction. Ruth withdrew early to her room, pleading weariness. Tyke was thoughtful, thinking of the thunder he had heard just before they had left the island. The captain went on deck only to find in the report of the second officer more cause for gravity.

Mr. Rogers came up to him as he emerged from the cabin.

"Couldn't get any water this afternoon, sir," he reported. "Found some; but it tasted strong of sulphur, sir."

"Yes, I know, Mr. Rogers," replied the captain. "I tasted some myself while I was ashore, and found it no good. Still, we've got plenty on board, so it doesn't matter."

Still the second officer lingered.

"What is it, Mr. Rogers?" asked the captain, who saw that the man had something on his mind.

"Why, I hardly know how to put it, sir," answered the second officer, a little confusedly. "Perhaps it's foolish to speak about it; and there may be nothing in it, after all."

"Out with it, Mr. Rogers," ordered the captain, all alert in an instant.

"Why, it's this way, sir," returned the second officer. "I don't like the way the men are acting. I never was sweet on the crew from the beginning, for the matter of that, not meaning any disrespect

to Mr. Ditty, who had the choosing of most of them. There's a few of them that are smart seamen, but most of them are rank swabs that don't know a marlinspike from a backstay. Seem more like a gang of river pirates than deep-sea sailors."

"I know that most of them are a poor lot," replied the captain. "But they've managed to work the ship down here, and I guess they can get her home again."

"But it isn't only that, sir," went on the other. "There's altogether too much whispering and getting into corners when the men are off duty to suit me. And they shut up like clams when I pass near 'em. And they're surly and impudent when I give 'em orders. I've had to lick a half dozen of 'em already."

"Well, you've got Mr. Ditty to help you out," said the captain.

"That's another queer thing, sir," continued the second officer, evidently reluctant to speak against his superior. "Mr. Ditty is usually quicker with his fists than he is with his tongue; but I never saw him like he is on this voyage. Seems like at times as though he took the men's part, sir."

"That's a hard saying, Mr. Rogers," said the captain.

"True enough, sir; but you told me to speak out. I had trouble with some of the men this very afternoon, sir, when I went over to the island. They

found the water tasted of sulphur, and some of 'em started in saying that the devil wasn't very far off when you could taste brimstone so plain. Of course, sailors are superstitious, and I wouldn't have thought anything of that, only it seemed as if the bad ones were just making that an excuse to get the others sore and discontented. They were growling and muttering amongst themselves all the time they were ashore.

"I've got it off my chest now, sir, and maybe you'll think it's foolish, but I thought you ought to know. There's something going on that I can't understand, and it bothers me."

"You've done quite right to tell me what you have, Mr. Rogers," replied the captain, "and I'm obliged to you. I'll think it over. In the meantime, keep your eyes wide open and let me know at once if anything comes to light. By the way, did you ever find anybody who saw what happened to Mr. Parmalee?"

"Not a man among 'em will own to having seen anything. It was a dark night," replied Mr. Rogers, touching his cap and turning away.

Captain Hamilton sought out Tyke immediately and related to him what Rogers had said.

"How many men that you know you can depend on have you got in your crew?" asked Tyke quickly.

"Not more than a dozen that I'm sure of," admitted Captain Hamilton. "That many've sailed

with me on a number of voyages and they came home with me from Hong Kong. They are as good men as ever hauled on a sheet. But even some of them may have been affected by whatever it is that's brewing. It takes only a few rotten apples to spoil a barrel, you know."

"A dozen," mused Tyke reflectively. "Those, with you and Allen and me would make fifteen."

"Don't forget Rogers," put in Hamilton.

"Sixteen," corrected Tyke. "That leaves only eighteen, if Ditty's got 'em all. Counting himself, that's nineteen. Sixteen against nineteen. Considering the kind of muts they are, we ought to lick the tar out of 'em."

"We could if it came to open fighting. But if they're up to mischief, they'll know what they're after and will have the advantage of striking the first blow.

"That is," he went on, "if there's anything in it at all. Perhaps we're just imagining they mean something serious, when after all it may be only a matter of sailors' grumbling. Rogers may have only uncovered a mare's nest."

"Perhaps," admitted Tyke. "All the same, I've never trusted that rascal, Ditty, from the minute I clapped eyes on him. An' since he lied so about Allen, I *know* he's a scoundrel."

"I hope he did lie," said the captain doubtfully.

"*Hope!*" cried the old man hotly. "Don't you

know? Look here, Rufe Hamilton, you an' me have been friends for going on thirty years, but we break friendship right here and now if you tell me you don't *know* that Ditty lied!"

"There, there, Tyke," soothed the skipper, "have it your own way. But what we have on hand just now is how to get the better of Ditty and his gang."

Gradually Tyke's ruffled feathers were smoothed and he devoted himself to the matter in hand.

They talked late and long, but in the face of only vague conjectures, could reach no definite conclusion. One thing they did decide: It was so to manage matters as to leave Rogers in command of the schooner when the captain himself should be ashore. Unless Ditty were actually deposed, and as yet there was no valid excuse for doing this, the only way they could carry out this plan was to see that Ditty was on shore at the same time that the treasure seekers were.

The next morning when the party was ready to start, Captain Hamilton spoke to Ditty.

"Mr. Ditty," he directed, "you will take ten of the men ashore on leave this morning in the longboat. I am going myself with the crew of the smaller boat. Mr. Rogers will remain in charge of the ship. If you find sweet water, send back for the casks."

Ditty started to make an objection.

"Beg pardon, sir, but I don't care for shore leave

myself. Mr. Rogers can go in my place if he wants to, sir."

"You heard what I said, Mr. Ditty. Mr. Rogers went yesterday," said the captain curtly. "Have both boats lowered at once."

There was no help for it, and Ditty yielded a surly obedience.

"What time shall I bring the men back, sir?" he asked.

"When I give you the signal," replied the captain. "Perhaps not till late afternoon. Take your dinner grub with you."

The boats left the ship's side together, and in a few minutes both reached the beach. With instructions to Ditty to keep his men on the east end of the island, the captain's party entered the jungle.

They easily found the path they had trodden the day before, and were well on their way to the whale's hump when they were startled by a queer vibration of the earth. There was no sound accompanying it. On the contrary, everything seemed hushed in a deathlike stillness. The cries of birds and the humming of insects had stopped as though by magic. Nature seemed to be holding her breath.

Then came a second quivering stronger than the first—a shock which threw the four treasure hunters violently to the ground.

CHAPTER XXI

"IF I WAS SUPERSTITIOUS——"

"WHAT is this?"

"An earthquake!"

"The island is sinking!"

"We'll have to get out of this!"

Such were some of the cries of the treasure hunters as the earth trembled beneath them.

For perhaps twenty seconds the sickening vibration continued. Then it stopped as suddenly as it had begun. The swaying trees finished their dizzy dance, and the rocks that had seemed to be bowing to each other like so many mummers resumed their impassive attitudes. Their lawless frolic had ended!

Drew had caught Ruth by the arm as she went down, and thus had broken the violence of her fall. But all were jarred and shaken.

As the more agile of the quartet, the young man was first on his feet. He tenderly assisted Ruth to rise, while the others scrambled up unaided.

"Are you hurt?" Drew asked the girl solicitously.

"Not a bit," she answered pluckily, and Drew reflected on what a thoroghbred she was.

The others also had sustained no injury. But

their forebodings as to their safety on the island had been quickened by this striking example of nature's restlessness. The giant in the volcano was not dead. He was uneasy and had turned in his sleep. It was as though he resented the coming of these interlopers, and was giving them warning to go away and leave him undisturbed.

"Now if I was superstitious," remarked Tyke, "I should say that something was trying to keep us from getting this treasure."

"Let it try then," said the captain grimly. "We haven't come as far as this to turn tail and run just when we're on the point of getting what we came for."

"Good for you, Daddy!" cried Ruth gaily. "We're bound to have that treasure."

They quickened their steps now. This was no time for leisurely investigation of the phenomena of earthquakes. They soon reached the point they had attained the day before. But as they had explored that section of the hillside already, they did not halt there, but pushed on to the west.

"Now," said the captain, as he and Drew disburdened themselves of the spades and mattocks they had brought along, carefully wrapped under the guise of surveyors instruments, "we'll go at this thing in a scientific way. We'll make a rough division of this whole section"—he included with a wave of his hand a space half a mile square—"into

four parts. No, three parts. Tyke must rest his leg. Then each must search his section to find some rocks that look like those beauties marked on the map."

The three scattered promptly, and began the search. They looked diligently, but for a long time found nothing to reward their efforts. Drew tried as conscientiously as the rest, although at times he could not make his eyes behave, and his gaze would wander over in Ruth's direction. It was in one of these lapses from industry that he saw her lift her arm and wave eagerly in his direction. He did not wait for a second summons, but hurried over, after calling to the others to follow.

The girl was flushed and excited.

"What have you found?" Drew asked, as soon as he got within speaking distance.

"Look!" she answered. "Doesn't that big rock over there seem to you like a witch's head—wild and ragged locks, and all that?"

From where he was then standing, he could trace no resemblance, but when he reached her side and looked from the same angle he raised a shout.

"The very thing!" he cried. "There can't be any doubt of it."

The rock in question stood apart from the rest on the slope of the hill. Nature had carved it in a moment of prankishness. There were all the features of an old crone, forehead, nose, sunken

mouth, nut-cracker jaws, while small streams of lava, hardening as they had flowed, gave the similitude of scanty tresses.

Tyke and the captain soon came up, and all their doubts disappeared as they gazed.

"The Witch's Head!" they agreed exultantly.

"With that to start with, the rest will be easy," cried Drew. "The Three Sisters can't be more than a few hundred feet or so away."

Ten minutes' further search revealed a group of three rocks, which, while having no resemblance to female faces, were the only ones that stood apart from all the rest as a trio.

The hands of the three men trembled as they got out the old map and pored over it.

"Thirty-seven big paces due north from the Witch's Head; eighty-nine big paces due east from The Three Sisters," muttered the captain.

"Paces, even big paces, is rather indefinite," commented Drew. "If it were yards or feet, now, it would be different. But one man's paces differ from another's, and a short man's differ from a tall man's."

"It was very inconsiderate of that old pirate not to tell exactly how tall he was," jested Ruth.

"Well, we can't have everything handed to us on a gold plate," said the captain. "We may have to dig in a good many places before we strike the right spot."

"Let's do this," suggested Tyke. "Each one of us men will mark off the paces, taking good long strides, an' see where we bring up. Then we'll mark off a big circle that will include all three results. It's a moral certainty that it will be somewheres in that circle if it's here at all."

They acted on this suggestion, Ruth, with pencil and paper, serving as scribe, while the men did the pacing. She was elated at the part she had played in the discovery.

It was an easy enough matter to make thirty-seven big paces from one point and eighty-nine big paces from another, but, as every student of angles knows, it was very difficult to make the two lines converge at the proper point. But though their methods were rough, they succeeded at last in getting a very fair working hypothesis. A rough circle of forty feet in diameter was drawn about the stake Drew set up, and within that circle they were convinced the treasure lay.

By this time the sun had reached the zenith, and before they started to dig they retreated to the shade in the edge of the jungle and ate their lunch.

"Hadn't you better wait until it gets a little cooler by and by?" asked Ruth anxiously. "It will be frightful under this hot sun. This is the hour of siesta."

"I guess we're too impatient for that," answered

her father. "But we'll work only a few minutes at a time and take long resting spells between."

Fortunately the ground was moderately soft within the circle, and their spades sank deep with every thrust. Tyke was not allowed to share in this work of excavation, much to his disgust. As for Drew and Captain Hamilton, their muscular arms worked like machines, and they soon had great mounds of earth piled around their respective pits.

But fortune failed to reward their efforts. One place after another was abandoned as hopeless.

They were toiling away with the perspiration dripping from them, when Drew was startled by a cry from Ruth. He leaped instantly out of his excavation, and ran to her. Ruth was standing in the shade of the jungle's edge; but she was staring across the barren hillside toward the west.

"What is it?" demanded the young man. "What do you see?"

"I—I don't know. I'm not *sure* I saw anything," she admitted. "And yet——"

"Some of the seamen?" demanded Drew. "I've been expecting that, though your father is so sure that Ditty and his gang will remain at the eastern end of the island."

"Oh, Allen! Not Ditty! Not one of the sailors! I—I could almost believe in—in ghosts," and she tried to laugh.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Tyke, who had come over. "What's happened? Did you see something?"

"Yes. It moved. It was there, and then it wasn't there. The space it stood in was empty," said the girl earnestly.

"For the love o' goodness!" cried Tyke, mopping his brow. "You've got me all stirred up. Now, if I was superstitious——"

"You will be if I tell you more about that—that *thing,*" Ruth said. She said it jokingly, and Tyke turned away, going over to where Captain Hamilton was still at work.

"It must have been the spirit of the old pirate come back to guard his hoard," Drew said lightly.

Ruth looked at him very oddly.

"What do you think?" she whispered, when Tyke was out of hearing. "Why should the ghost of Ramon Alvarez look so much like Mr. Parmalee?"

Drew paled, and then flushed.

"Do you mean that, Ruth?" he asked, and he could not keep his voice from trembling.

"Yes," she said. Then she flashed him a sudden smile. "Of course, it was merely an hallucination. But, 'if I was superstitious——'" and she quoted Tyke with a look which she tried to make merry.

CHAPTER XXII

BURIED ALIVE

RUTH pointed out to Drew exactly where the figure that had so startled her had stood. It was down the slope of the hill to the westward, and directly between two lava boulders at the edge of the jungle.

The figure—man, apparition, what or whoever it was—had lingered in sight but a moment.

Before returning to work in his excavation, Drew went down to the spot Ruth had pointed out. There was not a sign of anybody having been there. The earth between the huge lumps of lava seemed not to have been disturbed. He could find no broken twigs or torn vines at the edge of the jungle.

"She dreamed it—that's all," muttered Drew. "Poor Parmalee!"

He thought of the man whose tragic end was so linked with his own existence—of the body buffeted by the waves somewhere in the blue expanse that stretched easterly from this little island.

Of what use would the pirate treasure, if they found it, be to Allen Drew? This bitter query obsessed him. He would gladly give every coin and jewel Ramon Alvaraz had buried here, were it his to give, to see Parmalee, leaning on his cane, walk out of the jungle.

He was so lost in these gloomy musings that he started when he felt a light touch on his arm.

He looked up to find Ruth standing beside him.

"Did you find any trace of him, Allen?" she asked, in a voice from which the tremor had not entirely gone.

"Not the slightest sign," he answered. "The man or thing, whatever it was, seems to have vanished into thin air."

"It must have been mere fancy," she murmured, though without conviction.

"Our nerves play strange tricks sometimes," Drew rejoined lightly. "We are all of us in such an excited state just now that anything may happen."

"I've always felt that nerves had been left out of my composition," said Ruth, smiling faintly. "But when it comes to the pinch, I suppose I'm just as liable to them as any one else."

"No, you're not," denied Allen Drew warmly. "You're the most perfect thoroughbred of any woman I ever knew."

"Perhaps your experience has been limited," she suggested, with a flash of her old mischief.

"I'm perfectly willing it should be limited from this time on to just one woman," he was on the point of saying, but bit his lip just in time.

"It is strange that this apparition, for want of a better name, should have taken the form of

Parmalee," he continued, his jealousy in spite of himself taking possession of him. "Perhaps you were thinking of him, just then," he hazarded.

"Not at all," returned Ruth frankly. "Just at that moment I'm afraid my mind was fixed on nothing else but the hunt for the pirate's treasure."

Drew felt somewhat reassured by this, and they had turned to retrace their steps when he suddenly stood stock still.

"What is it?" asked Ruth in some alarm.

"I thought I saw an opening in the side of the mountain over there," he replied. "Perhaps the ghost, or whatever it was, is hiding in that," he added jestingly. "At any rate I'm going to take a minute and see what it is."

He made a step in the direction he had indicated. Ruth sought to restrain him.

"Don't you think you had better call my father and Mr. Grimshaw before you venture in there?" she asked. "You don't know what may be lurking there."

"Nonsense," laughed the man lightly. "They'd only be vexed at being interrupted in their digging. At any rate they're within easy call—if there should be any need of them."

Ruth was silenced though only half convinced. Together they went over to a gaping rent in the side of the hill.

As a matter of precaution, Drew had taken his

revolver from his belt and held it ready in his hand. He had really no expectation of meeting anything hostile in human shape and he did not believe that any animal that would be at all formidable ranged the island.

"If it's a ghost, I don't suppose this revolver would do any good," he joked, more to relieve Ruth's uneasiness than any that he felt himself. "At the very least I'd have to have a silver bullet or one that had been dipped in the river Jordan."

The opening before which they stood was irregular in shape and seemed to have been made by one of the convulsions of nature that apparently were so common to the island. It was, roughly speaking, about four feet wide and nine high, and from the glimpse they got into its depths seemed to widen out in the interior. There was nothing about it to speak of human occupancy and the ground leading to it bore no marks of footprints. Nor were there any bones scattered about that might indicate that it was the lair of wild beasts.

Drew cupped his hands to his mouth and sent forth a ringing call.

"Hello, in there!" he shouted.

There was no answer, but the reverberations of his own voice that came back to him seemed to show that the cave extended inward to a considerable depth.

"Hello!" he shouted again. "If there's any one

in there, come out! We're friends and won't hurt you."

Again there was no answer.

"Doesn't seem to be sociably inclined," muttered Allen grimly.

"I guess there's nobody there," said Ruth. "Let's go back to the others, Allen. We've spent too much time already on this foolish notion of mine."

"It wasn't foolish at all," protested Drew. "As a matter of fact it may prove to be of the greatest importance. We ought to sift the matter to the bottom. If there's anybody on this island we don't know about, it ought to be our first business to find out. I think I'll take a peep into this mysterious cave."

He made a step forward, but Ruth's hand tightened on his arm and he stopped.

"Do you think you'd better risk it, Allen?" she asked. "How do you know what may be in there. Suppose—suppose——"

"Suppose what?" he asked with a whimsical smile.

"Suppose anything should happen to you?" she half whispered.

"Nothing will happen to me," he rejoined. "Not that it matters much anyway," he added bitterly, as the thought swept over him of the black cloud of suspicion that hung above him.

"Just give me a minute, Ruth" he pleaded, hating

himself for his reckless words as he saw the pained look in her eyes. "I won't go in for more than twenty or thirty feet, just to see if there's anything about this place that we really ought to know. You stay here and I'll be back before you fairly know I've gone."

She reluctantly loosened her grasp of his arm and he plunged forward into the darkness.

For the first ten feet or so, the going was rendered rather difficult by projecting bits of rock that caught at his clothes and impeded his progress. But then the passage widened out steadily until he could not feel the sides even when his arms were stretched to their utmost limit.

The light that had followed him from the small entrance finally vanished, and he went forward with the utmost caution, carefully planting each foot for the next step. At any moment, for all he knew, he might find himself on the brink of a precipice.

"Black as Egypt in here," he muttered to himself, as he felt for the matches he carried in an oilskin bag in the pocket of his coat. "I guess I'd better strike a——"

But he never finished the sentence.

A deafening roar resounded through the cavern and he was thrown violently forward on his hands and knees. Again came that dizzy, sickening shaking of the earth, that nauseating sense of being lifted to a height and suddenly let fall, that squirm-

ing of the ground beneath him as though it were a gigantic reptile.

His earlier experience in the open air had been bad enough, but there at least he had had the sense of space and sunlight and companionship. Here in the darkness and confinement the horrors of the earthquake were multiplied.

For more than a minute, which seemed to him an hour, the convulsions of the earth continued. Then they gradually subsided, though it was some minutes later before the quivering finally ceased.

Dazed and bewildered, Allen Drew scrambled to his feet. His hands were scraped and bleeding, though he thought little of this in his mental perturbation.

His thought turned instantly to Ruth. What might have happened to her while he was away from her? The trees were thick near the mouth of the cave. Suppose one had fallen and caught her before she could escape?

He started to rush back to the entrance, but to his astonishment, could see no trace of the light that had marked the place where the opening had been.

He stopped short, puzzled and alarmed.

"That's queer," he muttered. "I guess that jar I got has turned me around. It must be in the other direction."

He hastily retraced his steps. But as the cave

grew wider and he found no sign of the narrow passage by which he had entered, he knew that he was wrong.

"Must have had it right the first time," he thought, "but it's strange that I didn't see any light. Perhaps there was a bend in the passage that I hadn't noticed."

Again he went back, feeling his way. The path narrowed and his outstretched hand came in contact with a shred of cloth that had been torn from his coat when he had entered. This was proof positive that he was on the right track. But where then was the light?

The answer came to him with startling suddenness when he plunged violently into a mass of earth and rock that barred his way.

The entrance to the cave had vanished!

In its place was a vast mass of earth, a slice of the mountain side that had been torn loose by that last mighty writhing of tortured nature and that now held him as securely a prisoner as though he were in the center of the earth.

CHAPTER XXIII

A DESPERATE SITUATION

MECHANICALLY, Drew took his handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the cold sweat from his brow. He tried to steady his reeling brain and bring some semblance of order into his thoughts.

This then was the end! Trapped like a rat in a cage, shut out forever from the world of men, doomed to die miserably and hopelessly,—sealed in a tomb while yet alive!

All the dreams he had cherished, all the hopes he had nourished, all the future he had planned—planned with Ruth——

Ruth!

The thought of her wrung his soul with anguish, but it also woke him from his torpor.

He *would* see her again! He would *not* surrender! He would *not* die! Not while a breath remained in his body would he give in to despair. There must be some way out. Fate would not be so cruel as to carry its ghastly joke to the very end. He would call on all his resources. He would struggle, fight, never give up for a moment.

His brain cleared and he took a grip on himself. The blood once more ran hot in his veins. His

youth and manhood asserted themselves in dauntless vigor and determination.

The first thing to do was to attack the wall of fresh dirt and rock that hemmed him in. Perhaps it was less thick than it seemed. He had no implement to help him; but his muscular arms and powerful hands might suffice to dig a way to freedom.

He sought to fortify himself by calling to mind all that he had ever read about prisoners digging their way to freedom. Their cases had seemed desperate, but often they had succeeded. He too would succeed—he *must* succeed. Ruth was outside waiting for him, working for him, praying for him.

He set to work with a dogged resolution and fierce energy that soon had the perspiration flowing from him in streams. Behind him the dirt and debris piled up in a rapidly growing mound. His hands and nails were torn, but his excitement and absorption were so great that no sensation of physical pain was conveyed to his overwrought brain.

At times he stopped to rest a moment and to listen for the stroke of pick or shovel from the opposite side of his living grave. But no sound came to him. He seemed to be in a soundless universe except for the rasp of his own labored breathing.

It was after one of these intervals of listening that he was about to resume his frenzied efforts when he thought he heard a slight sound in the cave behind him.

His heart seemed to stand still for a moment while he strained his ears.

There was no mistake. Some living thing was in the cave besides himself!

Instinctively, his hand gripped the butt of his revolver. Then with a bitter smile he put it back in its place. Why should he hurt or kill anything that was alive? Death seemed sure enough for any occupant of that cave.

He went back stealthily until he reached the wider part of the cave, where he had been when the shock came that had entombed him.

Again that faint sound, undeniably human, came to his ears. Pacing cautiously in the direction from which it came, his foot struck against something soft. He reached down and his hand came in contact with a woman's dress.

In an instant he had gathered the yielding form in his arms.

"Ruth!" he shouted.

"Allen!" came back faintly from her parted lips.

For an instant everything reeled about Drew and his mind was awhirl. Then he laid his burden down and fell frantically to rubbing her hands. Incoherent cries came from his lips as he sought to restore her to complete consciousness.

His vigorous efforts were rewarded a few moments later when Ruth stirred and tried to sit up.

"I must have fainted," she said; "or perhaps I struck my head against the side of the cave when the shock came."

"Don't try to talk yet," said Drew. "Just lie still a few minutes till you are stronger."

She obeyed, while he sat beside her holding her hand.

"I can sit up now," she said after a few minutes. "My head is perfectly clear again."

"Are you sure you didn't hurt yourself when you fell?"

"I think not," she answered, as she passed her hand over her hair. "My head doesn't seem to be bruised or bleeding anywhere. It must have been the shock."

"Thank God it was nothing worse!" returned Drew fervently. "But tell me how you happened to be here. It seems like a miracle. The whole thing staggers me. I thought I left you outside of the cave when I went in."

"So you did," she assented with a touch of her old demureness, "but that doesn't say that I stayed there."

"I see it doesn't," he replied. "But why didn't you?"

"I guess it's because I'm not used to obeying anybody except my father," she answered evasively.

"Tell me the real reason."

"Well," she said, driven to bay, "I was afraid

there might be something dangerous in here and—and—I didn't want you to have to face it alone—and"—here she paused.

Drew's heart beat wildly.

"And so you came in to stand by my side," he said with emotion. "Ruth, Ruth——"

"But now," said Ruth hastily, following up her advantage, "we must hurry and get back to the others. Father will begin to worry about me."

Anguish smote Drew. Ruth had evidently not the slightest idea that anything stood between her and freedom. How could he break the dreadful news to her? He felt like an executioner compelled by some awful fate to slay the one he loved most dearly.

"You mustn't look at me after we get outside until I've had a chance to arrange my hair," she warned him gaily. "I must look a perfect fright."

Every innocent word was a stab that went straight to the man's heart.

His mind was a tumult of warring emotions. At first there had been a wild delight when he had found himself in the presence of his heart's desire, after he feared that he would never hear her voice again. In the excitement of bringing her back to consciousness and listening to her story, the fearful peril in which they stood had been relegated to the background. Now it came back at him with re-

doubled force, and he had to close his lips tightly to suppress a groan.

He could have died alone, if escape had proved impossible, and met death like a man. But to have to watch Ruth die—die perhaps after enduring unspeakable suffering—the mere thought threatened to drive him mad.

And she was here because she had feared that he might encounter danger and wanted to meet it at his side when it came. But for that courageous impulse, she might at this moment be safe and sound out under the open sky instead of being buried alive in this island tomb.

Moreover her very presence here made their danger all the greater. There was little chance now of help coming to them from the outside. No doubt Tyke and Captain Hamilton would grow uneasy at their absence and look them up—probably they were hunting for them now. But they did not know of the existence of the cave, and now that the entrance was closed there was not the slightest chance of finding them. They would explore the mountain side, search every foot of the island, but their quest would be doomed to failure from the beginning.

While these thoughts had been hurrying through his tortured brain, Ruth had arranged her disordered hair as best she could in the darkness and stood ready to go.

"Well, Allen, what are we waiting for?" she asked. "You men are always complaining that the girls keep you waiting, but this time you're the guilty one."

He tried to adopt her bantering mood, but failed miserably.

"I'll have to throw myself on your mercy," he said. "But wait here a moment, Ruth, till I see if the path is clear."

Even in the darkness, he was almost conscious that she looked at him in surprise. But he needed time to get his thoughts together and decide on the easiest way of breaking the terrible news that weighed on his heart.

He cudgeled his brain to find the gentlest, most reassuring phrases that would alarm her least and keep up her courage. But there was the stark, hideous fact that could not be blinked or dodged, and when at last his lagging steps returned, he was no nearer a solution of his problem than before.

"I declare you sound like Tyke coming along the passage," Ruth laughed merrily. "They say bad news travels fast. So your news must be good, or you wouldn't be coming so slowly."

"I only wish you were right," he said, grasping at the opening. "But to tell the truth my news isn't any too good. Oh, nothing to be alarmed about," he added hastily, as he caught her stifled exclamation. "A little loose earth seems to have come down

the slope of the hill and blocked up the entrance. I'll get to work at it and clear it out in a jiffy."

He tried to throw a world of confidence into his tone, but it failed to ring true. In the darkness he heard Ruth catch her breath.

"Let's go and see just how bad it is," was all she said, and Drew with a chill in his heart, led the way.

"What is this dirt in here?" asked Ruth, as she stumbled over a mound that Allen had thrown behind him in his frantic digging.

"Oh, that's some that I've dug out already," Allen replied with assumed carelessness. "I just wanted to find out how hard the dirt was and whether it would give way easily. It's fresh and soft and we'll get the whole lot out of our way in no time."

He was about to start in again at the task when Ruth laid her hand upon his arm.

"You didn't dig all this out in that minute you were away from me just now," she said quietly. "You must have been working while I lay in there unconcious. Come now, Allen, tell me the whole truth. Remember that I am a sailor's daughter and am not afraid to face things, no matter how bad they may be. The cave entrance is badly blocked up, isn't it?"

"God bless your staunch, plucky heart, Ruth," blurted out Drew, his own heart kindling at her courage. "You're one woman in a thousand, yes,

in a million. I might have known you'd face the truth without weeping or hysterics. You're right about the landfall. I'm afraid it's a heavy one. I've been digging at it for some time without making much impression. But after all it's all guesswork and it may not be so thick as it seems to be. We may let daylight through at any minute. At any rate I'm going at it like a tiger. I worked hard before when I thought I was alone, but now that I've got you to look out for I'll do ten times as much. I've only begun to fight. We're just going to get out of this and that's all there is about it."

"And I'll help you," cried Ruth.

"Not with those little hands," replied the man vehemently. "You just stand back there and pray while I do the work."

"Those little hands, as you call them, are stronger than you think. I'm going to work with all my might and help you out. And that won't keep me from praying either. I guess the cave women used to work and fight just about as much as the men, and I'm a cave woman now if I never was before."

Again Drew sought to deter her, but she was determined and he had to let her have her way. The only concession he could gain was to make her put on a pair of buckskin gloves that dangled at his belt. They were woefully large for her shapely hands and at any other time would have furnished

a subject for jesting. But nothing now was further from their minds than laughter. They were engaged on a grim work of life or death and both of them knew it.

But though brave, there was a limit to Ruth's physical strength, and under such strenuous and unaccustomed effort it was not long before that limit was reached. Drew discerned it coming before Ruth herself would admit it.

He took her gently but firmly by both wrists and fairly compelled her to sit down on one of the mounds, where he improvised a seat that enabled her to rest her back against one side of the cave. Then he returned to the work with redoubled vigor, tossing the dirt aside as though he were a tireless steam shovel.

But though Ruth's body was resting, her mind was working actively, darting hither and thither in an effort to find a way of escape from their fearful predicament.

"Allen," she said, as he stopped for an instant to rest, "come here and sit down beside me."

He had never hesitated before at accepting that coveted invitation, but just now he wondered whether he ought to stop even for an instant. His herculean efforts had brought him to the very edge of collapse, but he was feverishly eager to keep on.

"Ought I, Ruth?" he questioned. "Every minute now is precious, you know."

"I know it," she admitted, "but you'll drop dead from exhaustion if you don't stop and rest. You *must* rest."

The gentle tyrant had her way and Drew yielded. He sat down beside her, his chest contracting and expanding under the stress of his labored breathing.

"Poor boy!" she said softly, and Drew thrilled at the sympathy in her tone.

"I've been thinking, Allen, that perhaps we had better not rely entirely on your digging for getting out of here," she continued. "It's all a guess as to how thick that wall of earth and rock is, and we may be using on it the strength that we need for other things. If you had an implement of some kind it would be different. But with your bare hands together with what little help I can give you it may be impossible."

"Yes," he was forced to concede, "I can't go on forever. Sooner or later my strength will give out. But what can we do but keep on trying? I'd go raving mad if I didn't keep on taking the one little chance we have."

"But is it the only chance we have?" she argued. "Did you bring your revolver with you?"

For answer he took it out of his belt and put it in her hand.

"Have you any extra cartridges?" she asked.

"Not a single one, but the revolver itself is fully loaded. That's just six we have to count on."

She was silent for a moment.

"There isn't any likelihood we'll have to use these for defending ourselves," she said at length. "There doesn't seem to be any living thing in this cave of which we need to be afraid. But, nevertheless, suppose we keep two for emergencies. That would give us four to experiment with, wouldn't it?"

"Experiment? How?" he inquired.

"I was thinking that perhaps father"—here her voice faltered a little—"and Tyke might be somewhere in the neighborhood hunting for us. If we should discharge the revolver they might possibly hear one or more of the shots and get some idea of where we were. I know it's only a forlorn hope, but we've got to try everything just now."

"It's a good idea!" exclaimed Drew, though he knew in his heart how slender a chance it offered. "And in the meantime, I'll keep on digging, so that if the shots aren't heard we won't be any worse off anyway. You fire the four shots at intervals of a minute or two and we'll see what happens."

He went savagely to work again and Ruth at short intervals discharged the revolver. The noise and the echoes in that compressed space were deafening and it certainly seemed as though the sound ought to penetrate to the world outside.

But though they fairly held their breath as they listened for a response, no answering sound penetrated from the outside into the cavern, and their

hearts sank as they realized that one more of their few hopes had failed them.

"It's of no use," observed Ruth sadly, as she handed the weapon back to Allen. "Either they didn't hear the shots, or, if they did, they thought it was some sound made by the volcano. We'll have to try something else."

Both were silent for a few moments, immersed in bitter thoughts that were as black as the darkness that surrounded them.

"Can you ever forgive me, Ruth, for having gotten you into such a trap as this?" he burst out suddenly.

"You didn't get me in it," protested Ruth. "I came in of my own accord."

"I don't mean that," explained Drew. "But you tried to persuade me not to enter the cave in the first place, and if I'd only had sense enough to listen to you, we'd both of us be out in the sunlight at this minute. Headstrong fool that I was!" he ended in an agony of self condemnation.

"Now don't blame yourself a bit for that, Allen," said Ruth earnestly. "You only did what you thought you ought to do, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred no harm would have come of it."

"And it was our luck to strike the hundredth time," replied Drew bitterly.

"Besides," said Ruth with a trifle of hesitation, "I think I'd have been a little disappointed at the

time if you had done as I asked. I'd have felt that perhaps in your secret heart you did it apparently to please me, but really because you were glad enough not to have to take any chances of what you might meet in here."

Drew was somewhat puzzled at this bit of feminine psychology, but he gathered some comfort from it, and this was perhaps after all the result that Ruth was seeking.

"Do you notice, Allen, how fresh the air seems to be in here?" she asked.

"I've been wondering at that," he answered. "To tell the truth my worst fear has been that it would get too close and foul for us to breathe. But it seems to be just as sweet now as it was at the beginning."

"What do you suppose is the reason?"

"It must be that the cave is a little larger than it seems to be. It seemed to be getting bigger and bigger as I went further into it. If that is so, it accounts for the fact that the air supply has not yet begun to be vitiated."

"But mayn't there be any other reason?" she asked.

"I can't think of any other," he answered. Then as a thought suddenly struck him, he jumped as though he had been shot.

"Why didn't I think of that before?" he fairly shouted. "There may be another entrance!"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE ALARM

UNAWARE of the possible tragedy that was being developed within a few hundred yards of them, Tyke and Captain Hamilton had kept on digging in the excavation. For Tyke had refused to be kept out of the work of recovering the treasure, and when Drew had strolled off with the intention of discovering what had frightened Ruth and had been followed shortly after by the latter, the old man had seized Drew's abandoned shovel and had gone lustily to work.

"Too much of a strain on that game leg of yours to be heaving up those shovelfuls," the captain protested.

"Nary a bit of it," answered Tyke. "I ain't ready to be put on the shelf yet, not by a blamed sight, and I guess if it came to a showdown, Rufe, my muscles are as good as yours."

"You're a tough old knot all right," admitted Captain Hamilton, his eyes twinkling. "But there's no sense in your doing Allen's work. Where in thunder has the boy gone anyway?"

"Oh, he'll turn up in a minute or two," returned

Tyke. "Wherever he is you can bet your boots he's doing something connected with this here work of treasure seeking. It simply ain't in that boy to lay down on any job."

"Drew makes a hit with you all right," laughed the captain.

"And why shouldn't he?" asked Tyke belligerently. "He's been with me for some years now, and I've had plenty of chances of sizin' him up. If there was a yellow streak in him, I'd have found it out long ago. If I'd had a son of my own, I wouldn't have asked for him to be any better fellow than Allen is, and nobody could say any mor'n that. He's got grit an' brains an' gumption, an' more'n that he's as straight as a string."

"Go ahead," laughed the captain, as Tyke paused for want of breath. "Don't let me stop you."

"I don't mind tellin' you, Rufe, what I've never told yet to any human soul," continued Tyke, waxing confidential, "an' that is that when I lay up in my last harbor, Allen is goin' to come into everything I've got. He don't know it himself yet, but I've got it down shipshape in black and white an' the paper's in my office safe."

"He's a lucky fellow," commented the captain briefly.

"An' let me tell you another thing, Rufe," said Tyke, "an' that is that Allen would make not only a good son, but a mighty good son-in-law."

He nudged the captain in the ribs as he spoke, with the familiarity of old comradeship.

"Lay off on that, Tyke," said the captain, flushing a little beneath his bronze.

"You don't mean to say that you haven't seen the way the wind was blowin'?" rejoined Tyke incredulously. "Why, any one with a pair of good eyes in his head can't help but see that those two are just made for each other."

"I'm not blind, of course," returned the captain, who now that the ice was broken seemed not averse to talking the matter over with his old comrade. "I know of course that I can't keep Ruth forever and that some time some fellow will lay me aboard and carry her off right from under my guns. And I'm not denying that up to a few days ago, I'd rather it would have been young Drew than any one else. But now—" here he paused.

"Well, but now," repeated Tyke.

"You know just as well as I do what I'm meaning," blurted out Captain Hamilton. "This matter of Parmalee's death has got to be cleared up before I'd even consider him in connection with Ruth. You can't blame me for that, Tyke."

The old man's face clouded.

"I ain't exactly blaming you, Rufe," he conceded, for despite his ardent partisanship of Allen, he could realize how Captain Hamilton as a parent must feel; "but I'm mortal sure that thing will be cleared

up before long. You know just as well as I do that Allen didn't kill Parmalee any more than you or I did."

"That's what I want to believe," returned the captain. "I mean," he corrected, as he saw the choleric flash in Tyke's eyes, "that's what I do believe."

"It's that scoundrel, Ditty, that did it himself," growled Tyke savagely. "He cooked up the whole thing and then shoved it off on Allen. You've seen enough of him since then to know that he's capable of anything."

"Yes," admitted the captain, "he's a dirty dog. But don't you see, Tyke, that even allowing that Allen is innocent, he's been *charged* with doing it. And to lots of people, that's just about the same as though he were actually guilty. Then, too, the matter will have to be tried out in the courts. Allen will have to stand trial and even if he gets off, as I hope he will, there'll be a cloud on his name as long as he lives. How could I let Ruth marry a man who had been charged with murder and who got off because there wasn't evidence enough to convict?"

"Mebbe Ruth would be willing to take the chance," persisted Tyke stubbornly.

"Maybe she would," agreed the captain, "but she'd never do it with my consent. She's too good and sweet and pretty a girl to link her life with a

man whose name was smirched. I wouldn't stand for it for a minute."

Tyke was framing a reply when suddenly the earthquake which wrought such dire results to the two of whom they were speaking shook the ground. The two men were thrown against each other and both went in a heap to the bottom of the ditch. The breath was knocked out of their bodies, and every thought was driven from their minds except the instinctive desire to remain alive until nature's onslaught had ceased.

When the worst was over, they scrambled to their feet, brushed the dirt from their clothes and faces, and stared grimly at each other.

"If it didn't seem too conceited to think that all this fuss was being made on our account," growled the captain, as he picked up his spade. "I'd surely make up my mind that something was trying to shoo us away from this treasure hunting."

"Yes," agreed Tyke. "Now, if I was superstitious—"

"I wonder," broke in the captain with sudden alarm, as he thought of the two errant members of the party, "where Ruth and Allen were when this quake happened."

"The only safe thing is to say that they were together somewhere," said Tyke. "I notice that they're never far apart. Don't you worry, Rufe. Allen will take good care of her."

But the captain was already climbing out of the excavation. He gave Tyke a hand and helped him up.

"Where did you last see them, Tyke?" Hamilton asked, as his eyes scanned the surrounding landscape without catching a glimpse of the figures he sought.

"The last I saw of Allen he was going down toward them trees," replied Tyke, indicating a corner of the jungle, "an' a little later, out o' the corner of my eye, I saw Ruth going in the same direction. Now, don't fret, Rufe. They'll turn up as right as a trivet in another minute or two."

"The jungle!" gasped the captain in alarm. "Don't you see, Tyke, that some of those trees have been shaken down. Maybe they've been caught under one of them. Hurry! hurry!"

He set off, running hurriedly, and Tyke hastened after him as fast as he could.

They were soon at the jungle's edge. Several giant trees had fallen victims to the earthquake's wrath, but a frantic searching among their trunks revealed no traces of the missing ones.

The captain wiped his brow and gave a great sigh of relief.

"So far, so good!" he exclaimed. "They've escaped that danger anyway. I had a fearful scare. I don't mind admitting that my heart was in my mouth for a minute."

"Same here," assented Tyke, who despite his faith in Drew's resourcefulness had secretly shared the captain's alarm. "But if they're not here, where in Sam Hill can they be?"

They raised their voices in a shout, but no answering sound came back.

Several times they repeated the call, but all to no purpose.

"Strange," muttered the captain uneasily. "It isn't like Ruth to go off to any distance without telling me about it beforehand."

"Nor Allen neither," put in Tyke loyally.

"You might almost think the earth had swallowed them up," pursued the captain, little thinking how near he was to guessing the truth.

"Well, the only thing to do is to keep looking for 'em until we find 'em," said Tyke. "You take that side of the hill, Rufe, and I'll take the other. We'll come across them probably before we meet up with each other."

The two men separated on their quest, calling out at frequent intervals. It did not take them long to skirt the base of the whale's hump, but when at last they met each saw only disappointment and a growing alarm in the eyes of the other.

"We'll have to try it again and make a wider circle," exclaimed Hamilton desperately. "We've simply got to come across them somewhere around here."

"Of course we shall," said Tyke heartily, though the crease in his forehead belied the confidence of his words.

Once more they made the round of the hump, this time ranging out much further from the base. Still their efforts were fruitless, and when they met once more, neither tried to disguise from the other the growing panic in his heart.

"Ruth, Ruth!" groaned the captain.

"Come now, Rufe, brace up," comforted Tyke. "While there's life there's hope."

"That's just it," replied the captain. "But how do we know there is life? Something serious must have happened to them, or they'd never stay away like this. They'd know we'd be worried about them after that shock came and they couldn't have come back to us quick enough, if they'd been able to come."

Tyke could not deny the force of this.

"Well now, Rufe, let's get down to the bottom of this," he said. "I'm afraid just as you be that they're in trouble of some kind. Now what could make trouble for them on this island? There ain't any wild beasts of any account here, do you think?"

"Not that I ever heard of," replied the captain. "We're too far south for mountain lions and too far north for jaguars. There may be an occasional wildcat, but it wouldn't be likely to attack a single person let alone two together. There may be snakes here though for all I know."

"Nothing doing there," said Tyke decisively. "Mebbe there's boas, but if so there're a mild and harmless kind, such as those they make household pets of in some places to keep away the rats. And if there are any poisonous snakes, it's against all likehood that both Ruth and Allen would be bitten. One of them would come scurrying to us at once for help for the other.

"Besides," he went on, "I know that Allen had his revolver along with him and he's a sure shot. No, I don't think we have to worry about animals or snakes."

"What is there left then?" groaned the captain.

"There's two things left," replied Tyke reflectively. "One of 'em is old nature herself. What she can do is a plenty, as we've seen since we come to this island——."

"This infernal island," broke in the captain viciously. "I wish to heaven we'd never seen it. I wish some one of these earthquakes had sent it to the bottom of the sea."

"I don't blame you much," assented Tyke. "But being here, we've got to take things as they come. Now, as I was saying, old nature may have taken a hand in causing trouble for the two young folks. But for the life of me I don't see how. We've already seen that they weren't caught under those falling trees. And there didn't any lava flow come with that last quake. And that being so I can't see where nature's got into the game.

"Now," he continued, "there's just one thing left —and that's men! There may be some natives on this island that feel sore at our butting in on 'em and they may have come across them youngsters and captured 'em."

"I don't think that's at all likely," rejoined the captain. "There'd certainly have been some sign of them, some boat, some hut or something else of the kind. But we haven't seen hide or hair of anything since we landed. The boat's crew, too, have been roaming over the island and they'd have reported to us anything they'd seen that looked as though people lived in this God-forsaken spot."

"Yes," assented Tyke. "And it stands to reason that Allen with his automatic would have put up a fight and we'd have heard the sound of shots. But there are other men besides natives on the island."

"What do you mean?" asked the captain in surprise.

"I mean Ditty and his gang of water rats," replied Tyke.

"You don't think that skunk would dare—" spluttered the captain.

"I think that one-eyed rascal would dare almost anything," answered Tyke. "And it struck me as barely possible that he might have come sneaking around to see what we were doing and perhaps run across Allen and Ruth. There's bad blood there, as you know, and it wouldn't take much to bring about a scrap.

"Not that I think that has happened," he went on, "because it isn't likely that Ditty's plans are far enough forward yet for him to show his hand. Still I may be wrong. I tell you what I think you'd better do. You can git around faster than I can with this old game leg of mine. Suppose you run back to the shore and see if Ditty is hanging around there. If he is and everything seems shipshape we can leave him out of our calculations. Then we'll have to figure out what we're to do next."

It was grasping at straws, but in their utter ignorance of the real facts they had nothing but straws to grasp at. The captain set off hurriedly, while Tyke went once more around the mountain base in the forlorn hope that this time something tangible would come to reward his efforts.

Once he thought he heard something that sounded like shots and he stopped short in his tracks. His old eyes, keen yet, despite his years, looked eagerly around. But as far as his eyes could reach there was nothing to be seen, and he came to the conclusion that he must have imagined the sounds or that they were caused by some rumbling of the earth.

In a surprisingly short time, the captain was back, panting and winded by his exertions.

"Well," asked Tyke eagerly, "did you find out anything?"

"The men were all huddled down on the shore evidently scared out of their wits. I guess we can

cross them off our slate. But how about you? Did you find any clue?"

"Nary a thing," answered Tyke dejectedly. "I thought at one time that I heard shots, but when I come to look it up there was nothing in it."

"We *must* find them!" cried the captain excitedly, pacing back and forth like a wild animal and digging his nails into his palms as he clenched his fists in anguish. "We'll go over every foot of this island. I'll get out every man on the ship and set him to work searching."

"I wouldn't do that—at least not yit," adjured Tyke, laying his hand on the captain's arm. "Of course we may have to do that as a last resort. But you know what sailors are, an' we don't want to have 'em cracking their jokes 'bout Allen an' Ruth going off together. Wait a bit. The day's young yet an' they may turn up any time of their own accord. In the meantime, we'll explore places that we haven't tried before an' mebbe we'll run across 'em. If everything else fails, then we'll turn out every man jack of the crew and go over every inch of the island."

To the agonized father, everything that savored of delay seemed intolerable, but he yielded to the wisdom of Tyke's suggestion and once more they started out in their desperate search.

CHAPTER XXV

THE LAKE OF FIRE

Drew was all animation in an instant at the new hope that sprang up within him with its offer of possible safety for his companion and himself.

"Why didn't I think of it before?" he repeated, his voice shaken with excitement.

"You didn't think of it before, because you were working like a slave. No man can work like that and think of anything but what he is doing. Oh, Allen, won't it be great if you are right?"

"I'm going to see if I am right," he replied.

"How can you tell?" she asked divining that he was fumbling at his pocket.

"In this way," he answered, drawing out the oil-skin bag that contained his precious matches.

He struck a match and held it aloft.

At first the flame mounted straight up in the air. Then an instant later it was deflected and stood out at a distinct angle from the stick.

"See," cried Allen jubilantly. "There's a current of air in the cave. It's too slight for us to feel, but the flame feels it. If we were sealed up utterly in the cave, the air would be still. Somewhere the air

is coming in from the outside world and it's up to us to find out where."

"Thank God!" murmured Ruth tremulously.

In the sudden transition from despair to hope, they took little account of the difficulties they might have to overcome before they reached that other entrance—or the exit, from their point of view—which they had reason to believe existed. But as their first jubilation subsided somewhat, a soberer view began to thrust itself upon them.

Admitting that there was an exit, what guarantee had they of reaching it? Suppose a fathomless gulf barred their way? Suppose the passage narrowed to a point too small for them to thrust themselves through? Suppose when the coveted exit should at last be found it should prove to be in the ceiling of the cave instead of the side, and hopelessly out of reach?

But they quickly dismissed these dismal forebodings. Those problems could wait for solution until they faced them. The present at least was illumined by hope.

"Come along, Ruth," cried Allen gaily. "Pack up your trunks and let's be moving."

"Only too gladly," the girl responded, falling into his mood. "I never did care much for this place anyway."

But suddenly a reflection came to her.

"How are we to find our way in this pitch dark-

ness?" she asked. "I don't know how many matches you have with you, but at the most they can't last long. And the time may come when a match would be more precious than a diamond."

Drew took out his bag again, and, taking the greatest precautions not to drop one, counted the matches by the sense of touch.

"Just thirty-two," he announced when he had counted them twice.

"Only thirty-two!" echoed Ruth. "And we may need a hundred and thirty-two before we get to the other mouth of the cave."

For a moment Drew pondered.

"You're right, as always, Ruth," he agreed. "We can't depend on the matches alone. We'll have to get something that will serve as a torch. While I was digging, I remember I came across many branches of trees that had been carried down by the slide in its rush. We'll see if we can't make some torches out of them."

He set lustily to work and soon had as many as ten good-sized sticks that promised to supply his need. He was afraid that not being seasoned wood they would prove difficult to light. But there proved to be a resinous quality in the wood that atoned for its greenness, and before long he had a torch that burned steadily though rather murkily.

"Eureka!" he cried waving it aloft.

"Good for you, Allen," applauded Ruth. "Now

give me the rest of those sticks to carry and you go ahead with the lighted torch."

"I'll carry them myself," he protested.

"No you won't," she said decidedly, at the same time gathering them up in her arms. "You'll have the torch in one hand and you need to have the other free for emergencies."

He recognized the common sense of this, but found it hard to let her do it.

"It's too much like the Indians," he said. "You know that with them the buck carries his dignity, while his squaw carries everything else."

"But I'm not your squaw," slipped saucily from Ruth's lips before she could realize the possible significance of her remark.

"Not yet," replied Allen daringly, wanting to bite his tongue out a moment later for having taken advantage of her slip.

"But let's hurry now, Ruth," he went on hastily to cover their mutual confusion. "Follow close in my steps and don't keep more than two or three feet behind me at any time."

They set off on the unknown path whose end meant to them either deliverance or death. The chances were against them, but their hearts were high and their courage steadfast.

They had need of all their fortitude, for they had not advanced forty paces before danger menaced them.

Drew holding his torch high so as to throw its light as far ahead as possible, stepped on what seemed to be a crooked stick in the path. Instantly the stick sprang to life, and a powerful, slimy coil wound itself around the man's leg as high as the knee.

His first impulse was to spring back. His next was to grind down with crushing force on the squirming thing beneath his heel. The second impulse conquered the first and he stood like a statue while a cold sweat broke out all over his body.

For he had realized by the feel that it was the reptile's head that was beneath his heel and must be kept there at all costs until the life was crushed out of it.

Gradually the writhings grew feebler, until at last the coils relaxed and fell in a heap about his foot.

"What is it Allen?" asked Ruth in alarm at his sudden stop and rigid pose. "Do you see anything?"

"There's no danger," he assured her, though his voice was not quite steady. "I must have stepped on a lizard or something like that, and it gave me a start."

He kicked the mangled reptile out of the path, but not before Ruth's horrified glance had seen that it was no lizard but something far more deadly.

Here was a new terror added to the others. For all they knew there might be a colony of the reptiles

in the cave. And in that semi-tropical region, the chances were vastly in favor of their being poisonous. At all events it behooved them to advance with redoubled caution.

They kept a wary lookout for anything that looked like a crooked stick after that, and their progress, already slow, became still slower as they went on.

Before long they came to a place where the cave seemed to divide into three separate passageways. Two of them had nothing to distinguish them from each other, but in the third they distinguished a faint light in the distance.

"The blessed light!" exclaimed Ruth fervently.

"I guess that's the path to take, all right," exulted Drew. "In all probability that light comes from the outlet of the cave. Hurrah for us, Ruth!"

Ruth echoed his enthusiasm, and they accelerated their pace. The hope that they had cherished seemed now about to become certainty.

But the way was rougher now, and at one place they had to make a long detour. But they made no complaint. As long as no impassable barrier of rock loomed up before them they could feel that they were getting nearer and nearer to freedom and life.

But before long both became conscious of a steadily-growing heat in the air of the cave. The perspiration flowed from them in streams. At first

they were inclined to attribute this to their strenuous exertions and the mental strain under which they were laboring.

"Strange it should be so frightfully hot," remarked Drew, as he stopped for a moment to wipe his brow.

"It's no wonder," responded Ruth. "It's hot enough on this island even when you're in the outer air, and it would naturally be worse still in this confined place."

"But we didn't feel that way ten minutes ago," objected Drew.

"We've done a good deal of walking since then," said Ruth, though rather doubtfully. "But let's get along Allen. I'm just crazy to get to the outlet."

They were about to resume their journey, when a great flame of fire leaped to the very roof of the cave about a hundred yards in front of them.

They stopped abruptly, and in the smoky light of the torch both of their faces were white as chalk, as they faced each other with a question in their eyes.

"Fire!" gasped the man.

"Yes," assented Ruth quietly but bitterly. "What we thought was daylight is nothing other than fire."

"Shall we keep on?" debated Allen.

"We're so close that we might as well," advised Ruth. "Perhaps we may be able to get around it somehow."

They went forward, though with excessive care, and a moment later stood on the brink of the most awe-inspiring spectacle they had ever witnessed.

In a deep pit perhaps six hundred feet in circumference was a lake of liquid fire! The molten lava twisted and writhed as though a thousand serpents were coiling and uncoiling. A vapor rose from the fiery mass that glowed with a hideous radiance in all the colors of the spectrum.

At intervals, huge geysers of living flame spurted up from the surface to a height of many feet and fell back in a glistening of molten gold and coruscating diamonds.

It was a scene that if it could have been viewed with safety would have drawn tourists in thousands from every corner of the globe.

But to the two spectators the thought that they were looking on one of the marvels of the world brought nothing but desolation and despair.

"This must be the source of the lava flow when the whale's hump is in eruption," said Drew in a toneless voice.

"I suppose so," said Ruth in a voice that for dreariness was a replica of his own. "Do you think it's possible for us to get around it in any way, Allen?"

"Not a chance in the world," answered Drew. "You can see that the passage we followed ends at the brink of the crater. From there on, there's just

a wall of solid rock. The only thing left for us to do is to get back to the place where the cave split into three parts.

They retraced their steps with hearts that grew heavier at every step. The passage that had seemed most promising had yielded nothing but bitter disappointment. Only two other chances remained, and who could tell that they led anywhere but to death?

At the juncture of the passageways, they hesitated for a moment only. There was absolutely nothing to indicate that they should take one of the remaining two paths rather than the other. Impenetrable blackness covered both.

"Which shall it be, Ruth?" asked Drew.

"You do the choosing, Allen," Ruth responded.

At a venture he took the one leading to the left, but had not proceeded more than a hundred feet when he stopped abruptly on the very brink of a chasm that spanned the entire width of the passageway. There was no ledge however narrow to furnish a foothold along its sides. Once more they were absolutely blocked.

Drew checked a groan and Ruth stifled something suspiciously like a sob. The tension under which they were was fast reaching the breaking point.

"Never mind," said Drew, stoutly recovering himself. "There's luck in odd numbers and the third time we win."

"First the worst, second the same, last the best of all the game," responded Ruth with an attempt at heartiness.

Again they went back and took the only way remaining. Upon the ending of that passage their life or death depended.

But as they advanced steadily and no barrier interfered, their spirits rose. Then suddenly they cried aloud in their joy, for on turning a sharp bend in the path a rush of air almost extinguished the torch that Drew was carrying.

A hundred feet ahead was an opening thickly covered with bushes, but large enough to admit of forcing a passage!

Ruth dropped her load of surplus torches. Drew, grasping her arm, hurried her along. He forced the bushes apart and pushed her through. Then he followed. They heard a wild shout and the next minute Ruth was sobbing in her father's arms, while Tyke—hardy grizzled old Tyke—had thrown his arms around Allen in a bear's hug and was blubbering like a baby.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOPE DEFERRED

THERE was a wild babble of questions and answers, and it was a long time before all had calmed down enough to talk coherently.

The captain and Tyke in their frantic search had come just abreast of the outlet at the moment when Ruth and Allen had burst out into daylight and safety.

Their hearts thrilled as they listened to the dreadful perils through which had passed the two who were dearest to them on earth and the narration was punctuated with expressions of consternation and sympathy.

"Well now," suggested Ruth after a half hour had passed, "let's get back to work."

"No more work this afternoon," ejaculated the captain. "You're going straight back to the ship."

"Indeed I'm not, Daddy," rejoined Ruth. "I'm all right now and I'll be vastly happier sitting here and seeing you go on with the work than to feel I've made you lose a day. We've got some hours of daylight yet."

The captain protested, but Ruth coaxed and wheedled him till he consented and they all went back to the ditch they had started and went to work,

Ruth alone of the party being forbidden to lift a finger.

They excavated to the volcanic ledge in half a dozen places. In none did they find a trace of treasure—not a sign that this soil had ever before been disturbed by the hand of man.

"Bad mackerel!" grumbled Captain Hamilton, finally climbing out of his last pit. "This looks as if we'd been handed a rotten deal from a cold deck."

Tyke looked up from his work, and began:

"Mebbe that— Now, if I was superstitious— Oh, well," he went on hastily, "you can't expect to find a fortune in a minute."

"But we got the bearings all right, according to the map, didn't we?" demanded the captain with some asperity.

"We certainly did," Drew put it.

"We can't dig over the whole island," complained Captain Hamilton. "It would be foolish. Hush! What's that?"

A rumble, a sound from the very bowels of the hill, smote upon their ears. Ruth ran to them.

"Oh, Daddy!" she cried, "is there going to be another earthquake?"

"Look there!" Drew said pointing upward.

Over the summit of the whale's hump hung a balloon of smoke, or of steam, its underside of a lurid hue.

"I say I've had enough for one day," declared

the master of the *Bertha Hamilton*. "Let's get back to the schooner before anything else occurs. Maybe a night's sleep will put heart in us. But I tell you right now, I, for one, would sell my share in the pirate's treasure at a big discount."

The captain was the most outspoken of the treasure seekers; but they were all despondent. They hid their digging tools, and departed for the shore of the lagoon, the volcano rumbling at times behind them.

They emerged from the forest just as the sun was setting. As they came out on the beach they were surprised to see that it was bare. Neither the longboat nor the smaller one was in sight, nor could anything be seen of the crews.

The captain called some of the men by name. There was no response. Then he cupped his hands at his mouth, and his stentorian voice rang over the waters of the lagoon.

"Ship ahoy!"

In a moment there was an answering hail, and they soon saw that a boat was being manned. It came rapidly inshore, propelled by four members of the crew, and, as it drew nearer, they could see that Rogers was seated at the tiller.

As the boat reached the beach the second officer stepped out.

"What does this mean, Mr. Rogers?" asked the captain sternly.

"Mr. Ditty's orders, sir," replied the second officer. "The men got scared at the earthquake this morning, sir, and after that second quake they flatly refused to stay ashore. So Mr. Ditty let them go back to the ship."

"But why didn't he leave the other boat's crew waiting for me?" asked the captain. "If they were afraid to remain ashore they could have stayed in the boat, rigged an awning to shield them from the sun, and laid off and on within hail."

"That's what I thought, sir, and I said as much to Mr. Ditty. But he shut me up sharp, and said it would be time enough to send a boat when you should come in sight, sir."

The captain bit his lip, but said no more, and the party stepped into the boat. They soon reached the *Bertha Hamilton,* and all climbed aboard. The first officer was standing near the rail.

"Come aft and report to me after supper, Mr. Ditty," ordered the captain brusquely.

"Aye, aye, sir," replied the mate.

As soon as supper was over and Ruth had gone to her stateroom the captain started to go on deck, but Tyke put his hand on his arm.

"Going to give Ditty a dressing down, I suppose," he remarked.

"He's got it coming to him," snapped Captain Hamilton.

"He surely has," agreed Tyke. "But have you

thought that perhaps that's jest what he wants you to do?"

The captain sat down heavily.

"Get it off your chest, Tyke," he said. "Tell me what you mean."

"I mean jest this," said Tyke. "Often there's trouble in the wind that never comes to anything because the feller that's brewing it don't git a chance to start it. He fiddles 'round waiting for an opening; but if he don't find it the trouble jest dies a natural death.

"Now, this Ditty, *I* think, is looking for an opening. As far as his letting his own boat's crew come on board when you had told him to keep them on shore for the day is concerned, that can be overlooked. You can't blame the men for being scared, an' any mate might be excused for using his own judgment under those conditions.

"But his not keeping your boat's crew waiting for you, even if they stayed a little away from the shore, was rank disrespect. He knew you would take it so. He knew it would weaken your authority with the crew. An' he expects you'll call him down for it. Isn't that so?"

"Of course it is," agreed Captain Hamilton.

"Well then," pursued Tyke, "if he did that deliberately, expecting you'd rake him fore and aft for it, it shows that he wants you to start something, don't it? An' my principle in a fight is to find out

what the other feller wants and then not do it. He wants to provoke you. Don't let yourself be provoked or you'll play right into his hands."

"I might as well make him captain of the ship and be done with it," cried Captain Hamilton bitterly. "I've never let a man get away with anything like that yet."

"An' we won't let this feller git away with it for long," answered Tyke. "We'll give him a trimming he'll never forgit. But we'll choose our own time for it, an' that time ain't now. Wait till we've found the treasure an' got it safe on board. Then, my mighty! if he starts anything, put him an' his gang ashore an' sail without 'em."

"You think, then, he wants me to knock the chip off his shoulder?" mused the captain.

"Exactly," replied Tyke. "An' if you don't, he may be so flabbergasted that before he cooks up anything new we'll have the whip hand of him."

"Well, I'll do as you say, though it sure does go against the grain."

Tyke's recipe worked; for when Ditty sauntered to the poop a little later to receive the rebuke which he expected and which he was prepared to resent, the wind was taken out of his sails by the captain's good nature and pleasant smile.

"Quite a little scare the men got, I suppose, when they felt the quake this morning?" Captain Hamilton inquired genially.

"Yes, sir," replied the mate. "There was nothin' to do but to get back to the ship. Some of 'em was so scared that they would 've swum the lagoon, and I didn't want 'em to do that for fear of sharks."

"Quite right, Mr. Ditty," returned the captain approvingly. "That is all."

Still Ditty lingered.

"I ordered the men in your boat to come back too," he said, eyeing the skipper aslant.

"That was all right too," replied the captain absently, as though the matter was of no importance. "The ship was so near that it wasn't worth while keeping the men out there in the sun all day."

Ditty stared. This was not the strict disciplinarian that Captain Hamilton had always been. He hesitated, opened his mouth to say something, found nothing to say, and at last, with his ideas disordered, went sullenly away. If he had planned to bring things to a crisis he had signally failed.

Captain Hamilton watched the retreating back of his mate with a somber glow in his eyes that contrasted strongly with the forced smile of a moment before, and then retired to the cabin to go again into conference with Grimshaw.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE GIANT AWAKES

Allen Drew had not been a party to the conference between Captain Hamilton and Grimshaw after supper. After the strenuous exertions of the day he had felt the need of a bath and a change of linen.

Once more clothed and feeling refreshed, Drew paced the afterdeck with his cigar, hearing the voices of Captain Hamilton and Tyke in the former's cabin, but having no desire just then to join them.

Although his body was rejuvenated, his mind was far from peaceful. He had not lost hope of their finding what they had come so far to search for; he still believed the pirate hoard to be buried on the side of the whale's hump. "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick;" but hope had not been long enough deferred in this case to sicken any of the party of treasure seekers. Yet there was a great sickness at the heart of Allen Drew.

That particular incident of the afternoon that had brought the remembrance of Parmalee so keenly to his mind, had thrown a pall over his thoughts not easily lifted.

It had shown, too, that Parmalee's strange and awful death had strongly affected Ruth. That mystery was likely to erect a barrier between the girl and himself. Indeed, it had done so already. Drew felt it—he knew it!

There was in her father's attitude something intangible, yet certain enough, which spelled the captain's doubt of him. As long as Parmalee's disappearance remained unexplained, as long as Ditty's story could not be disproved, Drew felt that Captain Hamilton would nurse in his mind a doubt of his innocence.

And that doubt, if it remained, whether Drew was ever tried for the crime of Parmalee's murder or not, just as surely put Ruth out of his grasp as though his hands actually dripped of the dead man's blood.

Captain Hamilton would never see his daughter marry a man under such a cloud. Drew appreciated the character of the schooner's commander too thoroughly to base any illusions upon the fact that Hamilton treated him kindly. They were partners in this treasure hunt. The doubloons once secured, the *Bertha Hamilton* once in port, Drew well knew that Ruth's father would do what he felt to be his duty. He would be Drew's accuser at the bar of public justice. That, undoubtedly, was a foregone conclusion.

Plunged in the depth of these despairing thoughts,

Drew was startled by the light fall of a soft hand upon his arm, and he descried the slight figure of Ruth beside him.

"Walking the deck alone, Allen?" she said softly. "I wondered where you were."

"Just doing my usual forty laps after supper," he responded, trying to speak lightly.

"I should think your work to-day in the digging, to say nothing of our experience in the cave, would have been as much exercise as you really needed," she said, laughing. "And all for nothing!"

"We could scarcely expect success so soon," he replied.

"No? Perhaps success is not to be our portion, Allen. What then?"

"Well," and he tried to say it cheerfully, "we've had a run for our money."

"A run for the pirate's money, you mean. Let's see," she added slyly, "that confession did not state just how many doubloons were buried, did it?"

"The amount specified I failed to make out," he told her. "Time had erased it."

"Then we are after an unknown amount—an unknown quantity of doubloons. And perhaps we are fated never to know the amount of the pirate's hoard," and she laughed again. Then, suddenly, she clutched his arm more tightly as they paced the deck together, crying under her breath: "Oh! look yonder Allen."

A strangely flickering light dispelled the pall that hung above the hilltop. The cloud of smoke or steam, rising from the crater and which they had first seen that afternoon, was now illuminated and shot through with rays of light evidently reflected from the bowels of the hill.

"The volcano is surely alive!" cried the young man.

The crew, loafing on the forecastle, saw the phenomenon, and their chattering voices rose in a chorus of excitement. Tyke came up from below and joined Drew and the captain's daughter. The glare of the volcano illuminated the night, and they could see each other's features distinctly.

"Looks like we'd stirred things up over there," chuckled the old man. "There are more'n ghosts of dead and gone pirates guarding that treasure."

"It—it is rather terrifying, isn't it?" Ruth suggested.

"It is to them ignorant swabs for'ard," growled Tyke. "Good thing, though. They'll be too scared to want to roam over the island. We want it to ourselves till we find the loot. Don't we Allen?"

"That's true. The disturbance over there may not be an unmitigated evil," was the young man's rejoinder.

Captain Hamilton called Ruth through the open window of his cabin, and she bade Grimshaw and Allen Drew good night and went below. Tyke re-

mained only long enough to finish his cigar, then he departed.

The light over the volcano faded, the rumblings ceased. Drew, in his rubber-soled shoes, paced the deck alone; but he could not be seen ten feet away, for he wore dark clothes.

He knew that Mr. Rogers had long since gone to his room. Most of the crew had either sought their bunks or were stretched out on the forecastle hatch. Yet he heard a low murmur of voices from amidships. When he paced to that end of his walk, the voices reached him quite clearly and he recognized that of the one-eyed mate. The other man he knew to be Bingo, the only English sailor aboard—a shrewd and rat-faced little Cockney.

"Blime me, Bug-eye! but wot Hi sye Hi means. The devil 'imself's near where there's so much brimstone. If that hull bloomin' 'ill blows hup, where'll *we* be, Hi axes ye?"

"Jest here or hereabouts," growled Ditty.

Drew stepped nearer and frankly listened to the conversation.

"Hi'm as 'ungry for blunt as the next bloke, an' ye sye there's plenty hin it——"

"Slathers of it, Bingo," said the mate earnestly. "Why, man! some of these islands down here are rotten with buried pirate gold. Millions and millions was stole and buried by them old boys."

"Yah! Hi've 'eard hall that before, Hi 'ave.

Who hain't?" said Bingo, with considerable shrewdness. "Honly hit halways struck me that if them old buccaneers, as they calls 'em, was proper sailormen, they'd 'ave spent the hull blunt hinstead o' buryin' hof hit."

"Holy heavers, Bingo, they couldn't spend it all!" exclaimed Ditty. "There was too much of it. Millions, mind you!"

"Millions! My heye!" croaked the Cockney. "A million of yer Hamerican dollars or a million sterling?"

"You can lay to it," said Ditty firmly, "that there's more'n *one* million in English pounds buried in these here islands. And there's a bunch of it somewheres on this island."

"Then, Bug-eye, wye don't we git that map hand dig it hup hourselves on the bloomin' jump? Wye wite? We kin easy 'andle the hafter-guard."

"The boys are balkin', that's why," growled Ditty. "They're like you—afraid of that rotten old volcano."

"Blime me! Hand wye wouldn't they be scare't hof hit?" snarled the Cockney.

"That bein' the general feelin'," Ditty said calmly, "why we'll stick to my plan. Let the old man dig it up hisself and bring it aboard.

"It'll save us the trouble, won't it? And mebbe we can git rid of some of the swabs, one at a time——"

"Huh!" chuckled Bingo. "One's gone halready. Hi see yer bloomin' scheme, Bug-eye."

"Well, then," said the mate, rising from his seat, "keep it to yourself and take your orders from me, like the rest does."

"Hall right, matey, hall right," said Bingo, and likewise stood up.

Drew dared remain no longer. He stole away to the stern and stood for a while, looking over the rail into the black water—no blacker than the rage that filled his heart.

He felt half tempted to attack the treacherous Ditty with his bare hands and strangle the rascal. But he knew that this was no time for a reckless move. There were only himself, the captain, and Tyke to face this promised mutiny. Probably they could trust Rogers, and some few of the men forward might be faithful to the after-guard. The uncertainty of this, however, was appalling.

After a time he went below and rapped lightly on the captain's door. The commander of the *Bertha Hamilton* opened to him instantly. He was partly undressed.

"Eh? That you, Mr. Drew?"

"Sh! Put out your light, Captain. I'll bring Mr. Grimshaw. I have something to tell you both," whispered the young man.

"All right," said the captain, quick to understand.

His light was out before Drew reached Tyke's

door. This was unlocked, but the old man was in his berth. Long years at sea had made Tyke a light sleeper. He often said he slept with one eye open.

"That you, Allen?"

"Yes. Hush! We want you in the captain's room—he and I. Come just as you are."

"Aye, aye!" grunted the old man, instantly out of his berth.

The light was turned low in the saloon. Drew did not now whether Ditty had come down or not; but unmistakable nasal sounds from Mr. Roger's room assured him that the second officer was safe.

Tyke, light-footed as a cat, followed him to Captain Hamilton's door. It was ajar, and they went in. The commander of the schooner sat on the edge of his berth. They could see each other dimly in the faint light that entered through the transom over the door. Captain Hamilton had drawn the blind at the window.

"Well, what's up?" he murmured.

Drew wasted no time, but in whispers repeated the conversation he had overheard between Bingo and the mate. When he had finished, Tyke observed coolly:

"I'd 've bet dollars to doughnuts that that was the way she headed. Now we know. Eh, Cap'n Rufe?"

"Yes," grunted the captain.

"What shall we do?" asked Drew.

"Do? Keep on," Captain Hamilton said firmly. "What d' you say, Tyke?"

"Yes," agreed Grimshaw. "Ditty is playing a waiting game. So will we. An' we have the advantage."

"I don't see that," Drew muttered.

"Why, we know his plans. He don't know ours," explained the old man. "We haven't got to worry about them swabs till we've found the doubloons, anyway."

"If we find 'em," murmured the captain.

"By George! we're bound to find 'em," Tyke said, with confidence. "That's what we come down here for."

His enthusiasm seemed unquenched. Drew could not lose heart when the old man was so hopefully determined.

"But Miss Ruth?" Allen suggested timidly, looking at Captain Hamilton.

"Don't bother about her," answered the captain shortly. "She'll not be out of my sight a minute. She must go ashore with us every day. I'll not trust her aboard alone with these scoundrels."

They talked little more that night; but it was agreed to take all the firearms and much of the ammunition, disgused in wrappings of some kind, ashore with them in the morning and conceal all with the digging tools.

"Jest as well to take them all along," Tyke had advised. "I hope we won't have to use 'em. But if we're going to take Rogers with us to-morrow and leave Ditty in charge here, the rascal might go nosing around an' find them guns."

"I hate to leave Ditty in possession of the schooner," returned the captain, with a worried look.

"So do I," admitted Tyke. "But after all, it isn't only the schooner he wants. She's no good to him until we git the treasure aboard. The only men it will be wise to take with us to-morrow are Rogers an' a boat's crew that you know you can trust."

Immediately after breakfast the next morning the captain summoned the second officer.

"I want you to take me ashore this morning, Mr. Rogers," he said; "and as I have a lot of heavy dunnage that the men will have to carry, I'll want a husky crew. Take six men; and I want you to take special pains in picking out the best men we have. Men whom we can trust and who haven't been mixed up with the whispering and the queer business that you mentioned."

The second officer's eye flashed, and he nodded understandingly.

"Aye, aye, sir," he replied. "As for the men, sir," he went on reflectively, "there's a dozen I could stake my life on who wouldn't be in any crooked game. Suppose," he counted off on his

fingers, "we take Olsen and Binney and Barker and Dodd and Thompson and Willis. They're all true blue, and I don't think they're in such a funk over the volcano as some of the others."

"They'll do," assented the captain. "They're the very men I had in mind. Call some of them down now and have them get this stuff up on deck. And tell the cook to send dinner grub along, for we may be gone all day."

"Aye, aye, sir," answered Rogers, as he left the cabin.

A little later the party gathered at the rail, and the captain spoke to the mate.

"Mr. Rogers is going to take us ashore, Mr. Ditty," he said pleasantly. "There are no special orders. You can let some of the men have shore leave if they want it, although after yesterday I don't suppose they will."

"I suppose not," replied Ditty surlily. "They'll all be glad when we turn our backs on this cursed island."

The captain pretended not to hear. The goods were stowed in the boat, the party and crew took their places, and the craft was pulled smartly to the beach.

"Now, my lads," said the captain briskly, as he stepped ashore, "there's quite a trip ahead of you and you've got a man's job in carrying this stuff, but I'll see that you don't lose anything by it. Step up smartly now."

The men shouldered their burdens and started off on the trail that had now grown familiar to the treasure seekers. The men were able to maintain a fairly rapid pace, and before long the party arrived at the edge of the clearing within which the treasure was supposed to be buried.

The captain took Rogers aside.

"Take your men back to the beach now, Mr. Rogers," he directed. "Remember, I want none of them poking about here. We'll rejoin you in good season for supper, if not before."

"Aye, aye, sir!" was the cheerful reply.

Rogers turned with his men, and the captain watched their backs far down the forest path, until they were lost to sight in the greenery of the jungle.

"Well now," he remarked, as he turned again to the others, "lively's the word. Let's get busy and——. Great Scott! Look at that!" he exclaimed, staring at the top of the whale's hump.

A column of black smoke was rising from the crater.

"Looks like the whale was going to blow again," Tyke said, with a feeble attempt at levity to disguise his apprehension.

The next moment the ears of the party were deafened by a terrific explosion.

CHAPTER XXVIII

BY FAVOR OF THE EARTHQUAKE

No THUNDER that had ever been heard could be compared with the sound of the explosion. It was like the bellowing of a thousand cannon. It was as though the island were being ripped apart.

The earth shook and staggered drunkenly beneath the feet of the treasure seekers. Great trees in the adjacent forest fell with tremendous uproar. The slope of the whale's hump was ridged until it looked like a giant accordion. Crevasses opened, extending from the summit of the hill downward. Rocks came tumbling down by the score, and a column of smoke and flame rose from the crater to a height of two hundred feet or more.

None of the party had been able to keep on a footing. All had been thrown to the ground by the first shock, and there they lay, sick from that awful seismic vibration.

A cloud of almost impalpable dust spread broadly and shrouded the sun. There was not a breath of air astir. Not a living thing was to be seen in the open—even the lizards had disappeared.

The spot where they had delved the day before, was now in plain view to the treasure seekers. They

saw the hillside yawn there in an awful paroxysm, till the aperture was several yards wide. Then, from beneath, there shot into the open, smoking rocks, debris of many kinds, and—something else!

Drew, seeing this final object, shrieked aloud. His voice could not be heard above the uproar, but the others saw his mouth agape, and struggled to see that at which he was pointing so wildly.

The crevasse closed with a crash and jar that rocked the whole island. It was the final throe of the volcano's travail. The lurid light above the crater subsided. The dust began to fall thick upon the treasure seekers as they lay upon the ground.

They sat up, dazed and horror-stricken. It was some time before their palsied tongues could speak, and when they did, the words came almost in whispers.

Drew found that his arm was around Ruth. She had been near him when the first shock came, and he had seized her instinctively. Now he turned to her and asked:

"You're not hurt, are you Ruth?"

"N—no," she gasped, "but dreadfully frightened! Oh, let's get away from here!"

She realized that he was holding her and drew away with a faint blush. He released her and staggered to his feet.

Tyke and the captain followed suit, and the three men looked at each other.

"Now, if I was superstitious——" began Tyke in a quavering voice.

"Never mind any 'ifs' just now," interrupted the captain. "We've got to get away from here just as fast as the good Lord will let us. I don't believe in tempting Providence."

"And leave the doubloons?" queried Tyke, in dismay.

"Yes, and leave the doubloons," replied the captain stubbornly. "If Ruth weren't here, we men might take a chance, but my daughter is worth more to me than all the pirate gold buried in the Caribbean."

Drew, if inaudibly, agreed with him. "Let's get Ruth down to the shore, anyway," he said. "Then, if you'll come back—— I saw something just at that last crash."

"By the great jib-boom!" roared Tyke, "so did I. What did you see, Allen? Something shot up out o' one o' them pits we dug yesterday. I saw it. An' it wasn't a lava boulder, neither!"

"You're right, there," Drew agreed. "It was a box or something. Too square-shaped to be a rock."

"We can't fool with it now," Captain Hamilton said, with determination, though his eyes sparkled. "Come, Ruth. I must get you down to the boat."

But here the girl exercised a power of veto. "I don't go unless the rest of you do—and to remain,

too," she declared. "I am not a child. Of course, I'm afraid of that volcano. But so are you men. And it's all over now. If Allen really saw something that looked like a box or a chest thrown out of that opening, I'm going to——"

She left the rest unspoken, but started boldly for the barren patch where they had dug the day before. It looked now like a piece of plowed ground over which were scattered blocks of lava of all sizes and shapes.

Captain Hamilton hesitated, but Drew ran ahead, reaching the spot first. Anxious and frightened as he had been at the moment of the phenomenon, the young man had noted exactly the spot where the strange object had fallen. Half buried in a heap of earth was a discolored, splintered chest. Its ancient appearance led Drew to utter a shout of satisfaction.

"I guess we've got it," he remarked in a tone that he tried to keep calm, but which trembled in spite of himself.

A cry of delight rose from all. The men joined Drew, and helped him clear away the earth. The chest soon stood revealed. Then by using their spades as levers, they pried it loose and by their united efforts dragged it over to the shade at the jungle's edge. They sat beside it there, panting, almost too exhausted from the excitement and their tremendous efforts to move or speak.

Ruth fluttered about like a humming bird, excited and eager. She looked somewhat less disheveled and begrimed than the men. But if they looked like trench diggers, they felt like plutocrats, and their hearts were swelling with jubilation.

The map had not lied! The paper had not lied! That old pirate, Ramon Alvarez, who had probably told a thousand lies, had told the truth at last in his ardent desire for the shriving of Holy Church. The treasure lay before them!

And how wonderfully the chest had been revealed to them! Not by their own exertions had the pirate hoard been uncovered!

A moment more and they were on their feet, Tyke panting:

"Now, if I was superstitious——"

They would have plenty of time for resting later on. Now a fierce impatience consumed them. They must see the contents of the box!

The chest was about five feet long, two feet wide and three feet deep. It was made of thick oak, and was bound by heavy bands of iron. A huge padlock held it closed.

The box had originally been of enormous strength, but time and nature and the earthquake had done their work. The wood was swollen and warped, the iron bands were eaten with rust. But the lock resisted their efforts when they sought to lift the cover.

"Stand clear!" cried Captain Hamilton, raising his spade.

He struck the padlock a smashing blow. Then he stooped and lifted the cover, which yielded groaningly.

A cry burst simultaneously from the treasure seekers.

"Gold!"

"Doubloons!"

"Jewels!"

"Riches!"

Priceless treasures heaped in careless profusion, glinting, glowing, coruscating, scintillating threw back in splendor the rays of the tropic sun.

None of them could remember afterward quite how they acted in those first few minutes of unchained emotion. But they laughed and sang, cheered and shouted, and it was a long time before the rioting of their blood ceased and they regained a measure of self-control.

There was no attempt made to measure the value of the treasure trove. There would be time for that later on. What they did know beyond the shadow of a doubt was that wealth enough lay before them to make them all rich for the rest of their lives.

Gold there was, both coined and melted into bars; Spanish doubloons, Indian rupees, French louis, English guineas; cups and candelabra; chains and watches; jewels too, in whose depths flashed rain-

bow hues, amethysts, rubies, diamonds, emeralds, strings upon strings of shimmering pearls.

The discoverers bathed their hands in the golden store, running the coins in sparkling streams through their fingers, all the time feeling that they were moving in a dream from which at any moment they must be rudely awakened.

At last the captain's voice, a bit husky from emotion, brought them back to practical realities.

"Well, the first log of our voyage is written up," he said. "But now let's get down to the question of what we're to do next. How are we to get this stuff aboard?"

All sobered a little as they faced the problem.

"We can take the chest just as it is," said Tyke. "A four-man load, though."

"What will the crew think?" Drew asked somewhat anxiously.

"Let 'em think and be hanged to 'em!" replied Captain Hamilton. "Yet," he added a moment later, "with things in the shaky condition they are and that rascal, Ditty, planning mischief, we don't want to take too many chances."

"Couldn't we make a number of trips back and forth and take some of the treasure with us each time until we got it all on board?" suggested Ruth. "We could carry a lot in our clothes and we could wrap some up to look like the bundles we brought ashore."

"Take too long," objected her father.

"How would this do?" was Drew's contribution. "As has already been said, the men would be surprised to see us bring a box aboard if they hadn't first seen us take it ashore. Now, suppose we take one of the ship's chests, load it with some worthless junk that would make it as heavy as this box, and bring it ashore. We could bring it up here, throw away the contents, put the treasure in it, and then call on the men to take it back to the ship. They'd recognize it as the same one they'd brought over, and their thinking would stop right there."

"By Jove, I believe you've hit it, Allen!" exclaimed the captain.

"That sounds sensible," conceded Tyke. "I guess it's the only way."

"Well, now that that's settled," went on the captain, "what are we going to do with the treasure in the meanwhile? It's getting late now. We can't get it aboard to-day. We'll want eight men besides Rogers. Then, there's all this hardware," and he indicated the firearms.

"Couldn't we leave it just where it is until we come back to-morrow?" ventured Ruth. "There isn't a soul on the island, and we'll be here the first thing in the morning."

"A little too risky, I'm afraid," said Tyke. "It's dollars to doughnuts that there's no one on the island but ourselves and the boat's crew; yet we'd

go 'round kicking ourselves for the rest of our lives if we found to-morrow that some one had been here an' helped himself."

"Let's pile some of these loose lava blocks on top of the chest," said Drew. "Make a regular mound. It will look as though the earthquake had done it."

That plan seemed the best, and they acted on it. They closed the cover after one more lingering, delighted look at the chest's gleaming contents, then they built the cairn.

"One sure thing," observed Tyke. "There isn't anybody going to come up here for jest a little pleasure jog—not much! That volcano's likely to spit again 'most any time."

The party started for the lagoon with their hearts bounding with exultation. But as they entered the forest path they were startled by the sight of Rogers and his men hastening toward them.

The captain was about to utter a rebuke, but when he saw the pale and frightened faces of the men he checked his tongue.

"Well, Mr. Rogers, what is it?" he asked. "Got a pretty good scare, I suppose, like the rest of us. I guess the quake's all over now."

"I hope so, sir," replied the second officer. "I thought sure it was all over with the lot of us. But it isn't that, sir, that I came back for. The boat's gone."

"Gone!" exclaimed the captain, staring.

"Yes, sir. It must have pushed away from the shore when the earth shook so. Just down here below a bit is a place where you can see the lagoon, and I caught sight of the boat about half-way between the shore and the ship."

"Oh well, if that's all, there isn't any great harm done. Mr. Ditty will send out and pick up the boat."

"But there's something else, sir," went on the seaman hoarsely. "As I looked out, it seemed to me, sir, as if the reef had closed up behind the schooner."

"What?" roared the captain.

"It's gospel truth sir," persisted the second officer. "I thought at first I must be dreaming. But I looked carefully, sir, and you can call me a swab if it isn't so! I couldn't see any sign at all of the passage where we came in, sir."

The captain's bronzed face paled, as the full significance of the news burst upon him.

"Come along and show me the place where you can see the schooner," he commanded, and started to run, followed by the whole party.

They had not far to go. At a place where the earthquake had rooted out a monster tree, a clear view could be had of the entire lagoon.

There lay the *Bertha Hamilton,* straining at her cable in the commotion of the waters that had been stirred up by the earthquake. And there was the

small boat tossing about like a chip. But the captain wasted not a second glance at these. He had seized his binoculars and his gaze was fixed upon the reef. As he looked, his visage became ashen.

The passage through which the ship had come into the lagoon was entirely closed!

A barrier had been thrown up from the ocean floor, and this completely landlocked the lagoon in which the schooner rode at anchor. The lagoon had welcomed the ship as though with extended arms. Now those arms were closed and the hands were interlocked.

The captain groaned at the magnitude of the disaster.

"Oh, Daddy, dear!" cried Ruth, darting to his side. "Don't take it so hard! There'll be some way out!"

"Never!" cried the captain. "The *Bertha Hamilton* is done for. There's no way to get her out. She'll lie there now until she rots."

"And we're prisoners on this island," gasped Drew.

They looked at each other, appalled. This last statement seemed to be irrefutable. They were captives on the island, which seemed itself to be in the throes of dissolution.

CHAPTER XXIX

MUTINY

Drew was the first to rally from the shock of this discovery.

"It is a terrible situation, God knows," he said. "And I know, too, Captain, how you must feel the loss of the schooner—if it *is* lost. But there may be a chance left of releasing her. The reef looks solid from here, but when you get close to it there may be a crevice through which she can be warped.

"She don't draw much water in ballast," comforted Tyke, although in his heart he had little hope. "An' you've got some giant powder on board. Perhaps we can blast a passage."

The captain straightened up and took a grip on himself.

"We won't give up without a fight, anyway," he said; and Ruth rejoiced to hear the old militant ring in his voice. "The first thing to do is to get on board the ship. Come along down to the beach."

The others hurried after him as fast as they could, but, owing to the number of trees that had been thrown down, their progress was exasperatingly slow. But even in the turmoil of his emotion, Drew blessed the chance that made it possible for

him to hold Ruth's arm, and in some especially difficult places to lift her over obstacles.

They reached the beach and the captain hailed the ship. Again and again he sent his voice booming over the water, and the others supplemented his efforts by waving their arms. It was impossible that they should not have been heard or seen; but the *Bertha Hamilton* might have been a phantom vessel for all the response that was evoked.

The captain fumed and stormed with impatience.

"What's the matter with those swabs?" he growled.

"Ah! now they're lowering a boat," cried Drew.

"They've taken their time about it," growled the captain.

The boat put out from the side and headed for the beach. When half-way there, the rowers overtook the captain's boat and secured it. Then, instead of resuming their journey, they turned deliberately about and rowed back. The boats were both hoisted to the davits and quietness again reigned on the schooner.

The stupefied spectators on the beach felt as though they had taken leave of their senses.

"Well, of all the——" raged Captain Hamilton, when he was interrupted by the sound of a shot fired on the schooner. Two others followed in quick succession. Then came a roar of voices. A moment later a man leaped from the mizzen

shrouds over the rail. He was shot in midair, and those ashore heard his shriek as he threw up his arms and disappeared in the still heaving waters of the lagoon.

"Mutiny!" roared Captain Hamilton.

"Yes," echoed Tyke; "mutiny!"

Horror was stamped on every face. One blow had been succeeded by another still more crushing. It was now not only a question of the loss of the schooner. Their very lives might be threatened.

"That scoundrel, Ditty!" gasped the captain.

"It's too bad we pulled Allen off him the other day," ejaculated Tyke savagely. "We ought to have let him finish the job."

"Thank God we've got the weapons anyway!" exclaimed Captain Hamilton.

"Don't think that he hasn't got some too," warned Tyke. "You heard those shots. No doubt the rascal's got all the guns and ammunition he wants. You can gamble on it that he isn't figuring on fighting us with his bare hands."

The captain turned to Rogers and the boat's crew.

"What do you know about this, Mr. Rogers?" he said quietly. "Can we count on you?"

"That you can, Captain," replied Rogers heartily. "I only know what I've told you before, sir."

"And how about you, my lads?" Captain Hamilton continued, addressing the boat's crew. "Are you going to stand with your captain?"

There was a chorus of eager assent. Not one of them flinched or wavered, and indignation was hot in their eyes.

"Good!" cried the captain approvingly. "I knew you'd sailed with me too long to desert me when it came to a pinch."

"That makes ten of us altogether," observed Tyke Grimshaw.

"Eleven," put in Ruth. "Don't forget me."

"Eleven," repeated the master of the *Bertha Hamilton,* looking at her fondly. "You're a true sailor's daughter, Ruth. I'm proud of you, my dear."

"Eleven," said Drew. "That leaves twenty-five on the ship, including Ditty."

"Twenty'four," put in Tyke. "There's one less than there was a few minutes ago."

"Yes," agreed the captain sadly. "And I've no doubt the poor fellow was killed because he wouldn't join the rest of the gang. "Twenty-four, then. That's pretty big odds against eleven."

"Beggin' your pardon, sir," said Barker, who was the oldest man of the crew, "but there's some of our mates over there that wouldn't never fight on the side of that Bug-eye—meanin' no disrespect to the mate, sir. Whitlock wouldn't for one, nor Gunther, nor Trent. I'd lay to that, sir."

"No, sir," put in Thompson; "an' Ashley wouldn't neither. No more would Sanders."

"I believe you, my lads," replied the captain. "They've sailed with us before. But even if they don't fight against us, they can't fight with us as things stand now. The very least that Ditty will do with them is to hold them prisoners until he's put the job through."

"But he isn't going to put it through," cried Drew, his eyes kindling.

"Not by a jug full!" declared Tyke. "But we'll know we've been in a fight, I s'pose, before we can prove that to him. He's put his head in the noose now, an' he'll be desperate."

"I only hope I get a chance at him before the hangman does," muttered Drew.

"There's not much to be done until those fellows come over here," said the captain reflectively. "We've no way of getting out there to the schooner. This thing will have to be fought out on land."

"Do you suppose they'll attack us right away, or try to starve us out?" Drew asked. "They've got the advantage in having provisions."

"No chance of starving us," replied Captain Hamilton. "There's plenty of fruit here, and then there are birds and small game. I saw an agouti run by a little while ago."

"Oh! Why, that's a rat, Daddy! Or is it a sort of 'possum?" cried Ruth, with a shudder. "And you men were hinting the other day that poor Wah

Lee might serve us up some dainty dish like that!" she added with a chuckle.

"By George!" Tyke suddenly shouted. "There's cookee an' the steward! We forgot them in our calculations. How about 'em, Cap'n Rufe?"

"Oh, that's so!" cried Ruth. "That little Jap boy never would turn against us, surely!"

"Nor Wah Lee," said Captain Hamilton reflectively.

"Neither of 'em would be much good," remarked Tyke. "You know how them critters are—both Chinks and Japs. Cold-blooded as fish. They'll keep on cooking for the mutineers an' serving 'em. It's none of their pidgin whether that rascal, Ditty, bosses 'em or you are at the helm, Cap'n Rufe."

"Well, I expect you're right," agreed Captain Hamilton. "They're poor fish to fry. We can't count on them to supply us with grub, that's sure," and he laughed shortly.

"An' look here!" exclaimed Tyke, coming back to their former discussion. "How about water? We might git along on this sulphur water for a little while, but we couldn't stand it long."

"That's a little more serious," admitted the captain. "But we can get milk from the cocoanuts. There's plenty of them. And there's the chance of rain, too.

"But I don't think it will come to a siege," he continued, aside to Tyke. "Ditty will figure that

he's got to have quick action. He knows that a vessel of some kind may come along any time, and then his cake will be dough. Besides, that bunch of rough-necks will be impatient for the loot that I've no doubt he's promised them."

"Where are you going to wait for him?" asked Tyke.

"Up at the whale's hump," replied the captain. "We can build a sort of fortification there that will help make up for our lack of numbers. They'll have to come out of the woods into the open up there, too. We might wait here on the beach, but they could keep out of gunshot, and we wouldn't get a decision. They can't land too quick to suit me."

Acting on this decision, the party started back at once, dropping Rogers by the way at the ledge that overlooked the sea, so that he could bring to them a report of any action taken by the mutineers.

Ruth's presence at his side was very dear to Drew as they toiled along, but he was deeply apprehensive for her safety. The men of the party had only death to fear if the worst came to the worst, but his heart turned to ice as he thought of Ruth left without protection in the hands of the mate and his gang.

She seemed to realize his thoughts, for she looked up at him bravely.

"I wish I had the carpet of Solomon here," he said.

"Why?" she smiled.

"I'd put you on it and have you whisked off to New York in a flash."

"Suppose I refused to go?"

"You wouldn't."

"I would! Why should I go to New York? All whom I love are here."

"Here?" he breathed eagerly.

"Surely. I love my father dearly."

"Oh!" he said disappointedly.

"You don't seem to approve of filial devotion," she observed, darting a mischievous look at him from under her long lashes.

"It's a beautiful thing," he answered promptly. "But there's another kind that——"

"We'd better hurry," the girl broke in hastily. "We're letting them get too far ahead of us."

They hastened on, and the words that were on Drew's lips remained unspoken.

After all, he thought to himself as the old bitter memory, forgotten in the excitement, came back to him, it was better so. They must not be spoken. They never could be spoken while he was under the awful cloud of suspicion. The love that had grown until it absorbed all his life must be ruthlessly crushed under foot.

The party emerged upon the slope of the whale's hump. Nothing had disturbed the cairn they had built over the treasure chest, nor were the rifles

and tools displaced. Captain Hamilton's decision to make the stand here was admittedly a wise one. Here was enough lava rubbish to build a dozen forts.

"Jest the spot," Tyke said vigorously, waving his hand in the direction of the heap of lava blocks that hid the pirate's chest. "What do you say, Cap'n Rufe? Shall we make that pile o' rocks the corner of our breastworks?"

"Good idea, Tyke," agreed the captain. "But pass guns around first, boys. All of you can handle a rifle, I suppose?"

"Aye aye, sir," said Barker, "you'd better believe we kin."

"If it comes to bullets," said Captain Hamilton, "those swabs will be so near to us we can scarcely miss 'em. That is, if they come out of the jungle."

"Suppose they circle around and come at us from above?" Drew suggested.

"We'll build a circular fort, by gosh!" cried Tyke. "An' build the back higher'n the front. How about it, Cap'n Rufe? Then if them swabs climb the hill to git the better of us, they can't shoot over."

"You're right, Tyke," agreed the master of the *Bertha Hamilton.*

"I don't belive," said Drew, "that Ditty and the men have many firearms. Nothing like these high-powered rifles, that's sure."

"That's so, Drew, I'm sure" said the captain promptly. "Now, boys, get to work," he added. "Roll 'em down! Here, Barker, you're chantey-man. Set 'em the pace."

Weirdly, echoing back from the wall of the jungle and hollowly from the hillside, the improvised chantey was raised by Barker, and the chorus line taken up by the other seamen as though they were jerking aloft the schooner's topsails.

"Oh, Bug-eye's dead an' gone below,
Oh, we says so, an' we hopes so;
Oh, Bug-eye's dead an' he'll go below
Oh, poor—ol'—man!

"He's deader'n the bolt on the fo'c'sle door,
Oh, we says so, an' we hopes so;
Oh, he'll never knock us flat no more,
Oh, poor—ol'—man!"

Under the impetus of this dirge with its innumerable verses the men rolled the boulders down. The fortification began to take form and give promise of shelter in time of need.

And there was no telling how soon that time might come!

CHAPTER XXX

THE FLAG OF TRUCE

The seamen rolled the larger boulders to the line Tyke indicated. Captain Hamilton himself and Drew chocked the interstices between the larger blocks with broken lava. A chance bullet might slip through into the fort, but under a rain of lead those within the fortification would be fairly well protected.

In two hours, and not long before sunset, the work was finished. Facing the jungle, from which the expected attack would come, if at all, the wall was breast high; in the rear, it rose higher so that no man unless he stood fairly in the lip of the crater above, could shoot over the barrier.

"And take it from me," said Tyke Grimshaw, "those bums ain't going to run their legs off to reach the top of this volcano. They're scared to death of it."

"And our own boys aren't much better," muttered Captain Hamilton. "See 'em looking over their shoulders now and again? They're expecting a shoot-off any minute."

"Well," the older man agreed, "that may be so. But it strikes me that the volcano and the earthquakes have been mighty helpful to *us*. Now, if I was superstitious——"

"How about locking my schooner in that blasted lagoon?" growled the master of the *Bertha Hamilton.* "This island is hoodooed, I've half a mind to believe."

Next the rifles and revolvers were carefully cleaned and loaded, and the ammunition distributed.

"How are we off for cartridges?" Drew asked.

"None too well," answered the captain. "If these fellows were sure shots, there'd probably be all we'd need. But they'll waste a lot. I've got several hundred in a box under my berth—and clips for the automatics, too. I certainly wish I'd brought 'em along."

"S'pose Ditty's gobbled 'em?" inquired Grimshaw.

"I don't think he'd find them. But they're no good to us now," groaned the captain.

At this moment Rogers came hurrying up.

"They're putting off from the ship," he reported breathlessly.

"How many of them?" asked the captain.

"Ten in the longboat and seven in the other," was the answer.

"Seventeen in all," mused the captain. "I wonder where the rest are."

"Probably dead or prisoners," put in Tyke. "The men who wouldn't join him he's likely killed or triced up an' left 'em under guard of one or two of the gang."

"That's probably so," agreed the master of the *Bertha Hamilton.* "Well, that reduces the odds somewhat; but they're heavy enough just the same. We'll have action now 'most any time."

They had been so excited and absorbed in their preparations that they had not thought of food. Now the captain insisted upon their eating what Wah Lee had put up for them that morning. But he portioned out water from the cask very sparingly.

Another hour passed, and still they heard no tread of approaching feet. It would soon be dark. But suddenly they were startled when a voice hailed them. It came from the direction of a big ceiba tree a hundred yards down the forest path.

"Ahoy, there!"

"Ahoy, yourself!" shouted back the captain.

A stick was thrust from behind the tree. A white cloth was tied to the end of it.

"This is Ditty talkin'," came the voice.

"I know it is, you scoundrel," roared the captain.

"No hard words, Cap'n," came the answer. "It'll only be the worse for you. I want to have a confab with you."

"Come along then and say your say," replied Captain Hamilton.

"You won't shoot?"

"Not you," promised the captain. "I hope to see you hung later on."

"No tricks, now," said Ditty cautiously

"I said I wouldn't and that's enough," responded the captain. "You can take it or leave it."

The mate emerged fully from behind the tree and came into the open space. At fifty paces from the fortress he halted.

"There's guns coverin' you from behind them trees, if anything happens to me," he said in further warning.

"I don't wonder you think that every man's a liar, Ditty," the captain replied bitterly. "You judge them out of your own black heart. Now, what do you want? Why have you seized my ship? Why have you killed one of my men?"

"I hain't seized your ship," answered Ditty sullenly. "You left me in charge of it. An' I didn't kill any of your men. Sanders got drunk an' fell overboard."

"Don't lie to me, you rascal," returned the captain. "We heard the shooting and saw the man shot as he leaped overboard. You'll hang for that yet, if I don't kill you first. You're a bloody mutineer and you know it. Now stow your lies and get to the point. What do you want?"

"We want them doubloons!" fairly shouted Ditty, stung by the captain's contempt, "an' we're goin' to have 'em."

"Doubloons? What do you mean?" asked the captain.

"The treasure you come here to dig for," answered Ditty. "You can't fool me. I've been on to your little game ever since before the schooner left New York. I got sharp ears, I have," pursued the mate, his one eye gleaming balefully as he looked at the heads above the line of the breastwork. "I know you found a map an' some sort of a paper what explained about that old pirate treasure. It was in a sailorman's chest in Tyke Grimshaw's office. Like enough Tyke stole it from the poor feller. An' I heard you tellin' Miss Ruth about it that night at dinner," he added, with a leering glance at the pale-faced girl.

"So that's why you shipped me such a lot of scum and riffraff, was it, you villain?" Captain Hamilton asked.

"You can think as you like about that," answered Ditty. "But this here kind of chinning won't git us anywhere. I know all about the map and that paper, an' I know that you come here lookin' for that loot. An' I bet you've found it a'ready. Now, to put it short an' sweet, me an' my mates want it."

"Suppose you got it?" parleyed the master of the *Bertha Hamilton*. "It wouldn't do you any good. The schooner is landlocked and can't get away."

"Even so it'll do us as much good as it will you," countered Ditty. "We've got the longboat an' we can easily make one of the islands near by where we can find a ship to take us to the States."

"And suppose I have the treasure and refuse to give it to you?" pursued the captain.

"Then we'll take it!" threatened Ditty, his one eye glowing with malevolence. "We'll take it if we have to kill every last one of you to git it!

"Hey! Barker! Olsen! The rest of you bullies!" he added, raising his voice, "you know blamed well the after-guard won't do nothin' for you fellers but let you git shot. You better come with us.

"We're nearly two to one, anyway, an' you've got no chance," he added to Captain Hamilton.

"We haven't, eh?" exploded the captain, his pent-up rage finding vent. "Do your worst, you black-hearted hound! And if you're not behind that tree in one minute, may God have mercy on your soul!"

CHAPTER XXXI

A DARING VENTURE

WITH an expression of baffled rage convulsing his features, Ditty turned and made for shelter. Once safely there, he hurled back the wildest threats and imprecations. So vile they were that Ruth shuddered and put her hands to her ears.

"I said I'd kill you all!" the mate shouted. "I'll take that back. I'll kill all but one!"

The threat was easily understood. Captain Hamilton's face went white, and he glanced hastily at Ruth. But he only said:

"Keep down out of sight, men. They know where we are, but we don't know where they are. They may try to rush us, but I don't think they will at first. Aim carefully and shoot at anything that offers a fair target, but don't waste the ammunition."

He had hardly finished speaking before there came a volley, and the bullets pattered against the rocks. They came from several directions. Ditty had arranged his men in the form of a semicircle. They had ample cover, and the only chance for the besieged lay in the chance that one of the enemy should protrude his head or shoulder too far from behind his tree.

Many times in the next hour the fusilade was repeated. It was plain that the mutineers were armed only with pistols.

"Probably Ditty laid in a stock before he left New York," the captain muttered to Tyke. "Automatics, too."

"His ammunition won't last long if he keeps wasting it this way," replied Tyke. "An' an automatic ain't always a sure shot."

Just then a cry from Olsen showed that the mutineers' cartridges had not been wholly wasted. A bullet had caught the Swede in the shoulder. He dropped, groaning.

Ruth was by his side in an instant. She bound up his wound as best she could, and, putting a coat beneath his head, made him as comfortable as possible.

"One knocked out," muttered the captain. "I wonder who'll be the—— Ah! Good boy, Allen!" he cried delightedly.

One of the enemy had thrown up his hands and, with a yell, had crashed heavily to the ground. He lay there without motion.

"Leaned his head out a little too far," remarked Drew composedly. "That was the cockney, Bingo."

"An' a dirty rat," Tyke said grimly. "That evens up the score."

"Not exactly," replied Drew. "We'll have to pot

two of them to every one they get, to keep the score straight. And they'll be more careful now about exposing themselves."

He was right; for in the short moments of daylight that remained they lessened no further the number of their foes. Nor did any bullet find its billet in the body of any of the besieged. But one ball knocked a splinter from a rock and drove it against the knuckles of Binney's right hand, making it difficult for him to use his rifle.

Now darkness fell, and the enemy seemed to have withdrawn.

"The real fight will come to-morrow," prophesied Captain Hamilton. "This was only a skirmish to feel us out."

"Do you think they'll try to do anything to-night?" asked Drew thoughtfully.

"I don't believe so," was the reply; "but we'll post sentinels, and if they come they won't take us by surprise."

"As a matter of fact," the captain went on, "I wish they would adopt rushing tactics. Then they'd be out in the open and we could get a good crack at them. As it is, we're concentrated and they're scattered, and their bullets have a better chance than ours of finding a mark. These sniping methods are all in their favor, if Ditty has sense enough to stick to them."

"They've gained already by this afternoon's

work," pondered Tyke. "When they started in we were seventeen to 'leven. Now, as far as we know, they're sixteen to our nine, for neither Olsen nor Binney's what you might call able-bodied. The odds are getting bigger against us."

"All the ammunition we have spent has accounted for only one man," added the captain. "Their cover has served 'em well. And our ammunition is short. I figure out that we haven't much more than thirty cartridges apiece left for the rifles. That won't last us long."

"Why not dash out and charge them?" suggested Drew.

"We will when our cartridges get low," agreed the captain. "But I'm hoping they'll charge us first in the morning. We could drop a bunch of 'em before they closed in on us, and then we'd have a better chance in hand-to-hand fighting."

After dark the captain posted three men some distance within the forest, with the promise that they should be relieved at midnight and with strict injunctions to keep a vigilant watch and report to him at once should anything seem suspicious.

Rogers was delegated to make his way down to the beach, where it was supposed the mutineers would encamp for the night, to see if he could gain any information as to their plan of attack on the morrow.

To Ruth this whole situation was a most terrify-

ing one; but nobody displayed more bravery than she.

She had attended to the two wounded men skilfully. She had been obliged to arrange a tourniquet on Olsen's shoulder, or the man would have bled to death; and she had done this as well as a more practised nurse. The wound was a clean one, the bullet having bored right through the shoulder.

Binney's wound was merely painful, and he could not use his rifle effectively. But he could handle an automatic with his left hand.

The departure of the mutineers and the coming of night released their minds and hearts from anxiety to a certain degree. Night fowls in the forest shouted their raucous notes back and forth, and there were some squealings and gruntings at the edge of the jungle that betrayed the presence of certain small animals that might add to their bill of fare could they but capture them.

"We'll forage for grub to-morrow," said Captain Hamilton. "It's too dark to-night to tell what you were catching, even if you went after those creatures. Ruth says she doesn't want agouti because they're too much like rats; but maybe there are creatures like polecats here—and they'd be a whole lot worse."

A daring idea came into Drew's mind, but he did not mention it to Tyke or the captain because he felt sure that they would not approve. He

acknowledged to himself that it was a forlorn hope, but he knew, too, that forlorn hopes often won by their very audacity.

He knew that the moon rose late that night, and as darkness was essential to the execution of his plan, he rose shortly and said:

"Think I'll go out and do a little scouting on my own account."

The captain looked at him in some surprise.

"Well," he said slowly, "we can't get any too much information; but we're fearfully short of men, and you're the best shot we have. Better be careful."

"Yes, do be careful, Allen!" exclaimed Ruth. "For my sake," she added in a whisper.

"Do you care very much?" he responded, in the same tone.

"Care!" she repeated softly. It was only one word, but it was eloquent and her eyes were suspiciously moist.

He pressed her hand and she did not try to withdraw it.

"I'll be careful," he promised, releasing it at last. Another moment and he had surmounted the barrier and was swallowed up in the gloom of the forest.

From his repeated trips over the trail, Drew had a pretty good idea of the locality, and had it not been for the fallen trees that had been torn up by the

cataclysm of the morning, he would have had little difficulty in gaining the beach. But again and again he had to make long detours, and as the darkness was intense he had to rely entirely on his sense of of touch; so his progress was slow.

Nearly two hours elapsed before he caught sight of a light beyond the trees that he thought must come from the campfire of the mutineers. He crept forward with exceeding care, for at any moment he might stumble over some sentinel. But, with the lack of discipline that usually accompanies such lawless ventures and relying upon their preponderance in numbers, the mutineers had neglected such a precaution.

With the stealth of an Indian on a foray, Drew approached the beach until he was not more than a hundred yards from the fire. There he sheltered himself behind a massive tree trunk and surveyed the scene.

He saw Rogers nowhere about. The mutineers had made a great fire of driftwood, more for its cheerful effect than for any other reason, for the night was oppressively warm. At some distance from it the men were sitting or lying in sprawling attitudes. Some were sleeping, some singing, while one tall man, whom Drew recognized as Ditty, was engaged in earnest conversation with two others, probably his lieutenants.

Drew counted them twice to make sure there was

no mistake. There were sixteen in all. Only one, then, had been accounted for that afternoon. And there were but nine able-bodied men in the fort, counting Binney as able-bodied.

Sixteen to nine! Nearly two to one! And men who would fight desperately because in joining this mutiny they knew that they stood in peril of the hangman's noose or the electric chair.

Drew's resolution hardened. The fire cast a wide zone of light on the beach and the surrounding water. But over the eastern end of the lagoon darkness hung heavily. Keeping in the shelter of the palms, he went northward, following the contour of the lagoon until he reached the point where vegetation ceased and the reef began.

Although this reef was volcanic (indeed the whole island had undoubtedly been thrown up from the floor of the sea by some subterranean convulsion in ages past), the coral insects had been at work adding to the strength of the lagoon's barriers. The recent quake that had lifted the reef had ground much of this coral-work to dust. Drew found himself wading ankle deep in it as he approached the water.

The little waves lapped at his feet. There was a shimmering glow on the surface of the lagoon, as there always is upon moving water. Outside, the surf sighed, retreated, advanced, and again sighed, in unchanging and ceaseless rotation.

Drew disrobed slowly. He could not see the schooner, but he knew about where she lay. Indeed, he could hear the water slapping against her sides and the creaking of her blocks and stays. She was not far off the shore.

And yet he hesitated before wading in. He was a good swimmer, and the water was warm; the actual getting to the schooner did not trouble his mind in the least. But, as he scanned the surface of the lagoon, there was a phosphorescent flash several fathoms out. Was it a leaping fish, or——

His eyes had become accustomed to the semi-darkness. Drifting in was some object—a small, three-cornered, sail-like thing. Another flash of phosphorescence, and the triangular fin disappeared.

Drew shuddered as he stood naked at the water's edge. He could not fail to identify the creature. Something besides the *Bertha Hamilton* had been shut in the lagoon by the rising reef.

"And I venture to say that that shark is mighty hungry, too—unless he found poor Sanders," muttered the shivering Drew.

He then waded into the water.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE BATTLE IN THE FORECASTLE

Making as little disturbance as possible, Drew sank to his armpits in the pellucid waters, and then began to swim. He believed the shark had started briskly for some other point in the lagoon; but he knew the eyes of the creature were sharp.

All about him, as the young man moved through the water, there were millions of tiny organisms that would betray his presence, as they had the shark's, at the first ripple. These minute infusorians would glow with the pale gleam of phosphorescence if the water were ruffled. Therefore, he had to swim carefully and slowly, when each second his nerves cried out for rapid, panic-stricken action.

He came at last to the schooner's stern without mishap. He could see her tall hull and taller spars above him. There was no light in the after part of the vessel; nor was there even a riding light. The mutineers whom Ditty had left aboard had evidently thrown off all discipline.

Finding no line hanging from the rail aft, Drew swam around the schooner to her bows. Here was the anchor chain, and up this he clambered nimbly to the rail.

Cautiously he raised his head above the rail and looked about him. There was a light in the forecastle, but most of the deck was in deep shadow. Very slowly he pulled himself inboard and dropped down in the bows. Then, on hands and knees and avoiding any spot of light, he crept noiselessly toward the forecastle and looked in.

By the light of the lamp swinging in its gimbals, he could see five men seated on the floor with their hands tied behind them. At a little distance two other men were seated, both with revolvers thrust in their belts.

The nearest of the guards was talking at the moment, and Drew easily heard what was said.

"You're a bloomin' fool, I tell you, Trent," he was saying to one of the prisoners. "Ditty has got the old man dead to rights. The after-guard hain't got the ghost of a chance. You'd better pitch in an take your luck along with the rest of us."

"You're a lot of bloody murderers," growled the one addressed, "and you'll swing for this business yet."

"Not as much chance of our swingin' as there is of you gittin' what Sanders got," retorted the other. "He's 'bout eat up by the sharks by this time. An' when Ditty comes back with the loot, he ain't goin' to let you live to peach on 'im. No, siree, he ain't. Dead men tell no tales."

Drew waited no longer. He had no weapon with

him, not even a knife. But he counted on the advantage of surprise. He gathered himself together, and, with the agility of a panther, leaped upon the shoulders of the man seated beneath him. They went to the deck with a crash. The fellow was stunned by the shock, and lay motionless; but Drew was on his feet in a second.

The other mutineer leaped up, but when he saw the white and dripping figure of the unexpected visitor he dropped the automatic and fell back against the mess table, shaking and with his hands before his eyes.

"It's a ghost!" yelled Trent, no less frightened than the others, but more voluble. "It's Sanders been an' boarded us!"

The prisoners, crowded together on the deck of the forecastle, glared at the apparition of the naked man in horror. After all, the mutineer had the most courage.

"Blast my eyes!" he suddenly shouted. "Sanders wasn't never so big as him; 'nless he's growed since he was sent to the sharks."

He sprang forward to peer into Drew's face. The latter's fist shot out and landed resoundingly on the fellow's jaw.

"Nor he don't hit like Sanders, by mighty!" yelled the fellow. "Nor like no ghost. It's that blasted Drew—I knows 'im now."

"And you're going to know more about me

directly," said Drew, between his teeth, following the fellow up for a second blow.

But the mutineer had recovered himself, both in mind and body. He was a big, beefy chap, weighing fifty pounds heavier than Drew, despite the latter's bone and muscle. No man, no matter how well he can spar, can afford to give away fifty pounds in a rough and tumble fight and expect not to suffer for it.

The fellow put up a good defense, and Drew suddenly became aware that he himself was at a terrible disadvantage. He was a naked man against one clothed and booted. He could defend himself from the flail-like blows of his antagonist and could get in some of his own swift hooks and punches. But when he was at close quarters the fellow played a deadly trick on him.

As Drew stepped in to deliver a short-armed jolt to the mutineer's head, the latter took the punishment offered, but, with all his weight, stamped on Drew's unprotected foot.

The groan that this forced from the young man's lips brought a diabolical grin to the mutineer's face. Even the satisfaction of changing that grin to a bloody smear, as he did the very next moment by giving a fearful blow to the mouth, did not relieve Drew's pain.

He had to keep the fellow at arm's length, and that was not advantageous to his own style of fight-

ing. He could make a better record in close-up work. But the mutineer wore heavy sea-boots, and Drew already felt himself crippled. His own foot-work was spoiled. He limped as badly as had Tyke Grimshaw for a while.

There was not room for a fair field in the crowded forecastle, at best. The big sailor was very wary about stepping near the five prisoners, but he forced Drew, time and again, against the body of the prone and unconscious man on the deck. Three times his naked antagonist all but sprawled over this obstruction.

In fact, Drew was not getting much the best of it, although few of the mutineer's blows landed. This fighting at arm's length never yet brought a quick decision. And that was what Allen Drew was striving for. For all he knew, Ditty might take it into his head to come off to the schooner before bedtime. If he were caught in this plight, he would be utterly undone.

This thought harried the young man's very soul. All he had risked in swimming out to the schooner would go for nothing. Not only would his object in coming fail of consummation, but if Ditty caught him, the besieged party up on the side of the whale's hump would lose its best shot.

Thus convinced of the necessity for haste, Drew suddenly rushed in. He stifled a cry as the heavy boot crunched down on his foot once again. This

was no time for fair fighting. He seized his antagonist by the collar of his shirt, jerked him forward, and at the same time planted a right upper-cut on the point of the jaw.

The fellow crashed to the deck—down and out without a murmur. Drew, panting and limping, leaving a trail of blood wherever he stepped, secured some lengths of spun yarn and tied both mutineers hand and foot before he gave any attention to the murmuring prisoners.

"Now, men," he said, turning to the five, "you know me. I'm Mr. Drew and I'm no ghost."

"You don't hit like no ghost," grinned Trent. "I'm mighty glad you come, Mr. Drew. It would have been all up with us when old Bug-eye come back if you hadn't."

"You're fine fellows and all right to stand up for your captain," replied Drew; "and you'll find that you've not only been on the right side, but on the winning side. However, we've got to hurry. Where's a knife?"

"You'll find one in that fellow's belt," said Whitlock, pointing to one of the mutineers.

Drew secured it and cut the ropes that bound the prisoners. They fell to rubbing their arms and legs to get the blood to circulating.

"As soon as you can move about, get the dinghy ready," directed Drew. "Stow in it all the provisions it will hold together with some casks of water.

And you'd better bring Wah Lee and the Jap along. I've got to go to the captain's cabin, but I'll be back before you're ready. Smart, now, for we don't know what minute Ditty may take a notion to come aboard."

Drew hurried aft and into his own room where he quickly got into some clothing and bandaged his crushed foot. Then he pushed into the captain's stateroom. There was no light there, but he dropped on his hands and knees and felt under the berth.

His hand touched the sharp corner of a box. He dragged it out and hurried up the companion-way where he could examine it by the light of a lantern. He recognized at once the label of a well-known ammuntion company, and knew that these must be the cartridges of which the captain had spoken. That box perhaps spelled salvation for the treasure seekers.

With his heart throbbing with elation and tightly clutching the precious box, Drew hastened to the rail where the men were preparing to launch the boat. Wah Lee and Namco stood by, blinking with true Oriental stolidity. They betrayed neither eagerness nor reluctance, nor was there the slightest trace of curiosity. For them it was all in the day's work.

The seamen heaped in all the provisions and water that the boat would hold and still leave room

for its occupants. Drew advised muffling the oars, and with barely a sound the craft moved toward the shore. Heavily laden at is was, the progress was slow. They kept cautiously out of the zone of light cast by the mutineers' campfire, which now, however, was dying out. Finally the craft grated on the sand.

Under Drew's whispered directions, the men shouldered the stores, and the party commenced the toilsome march inland to the little fort.

It was fully midnight when they were challenged by the sentinels at the edge of the wood.

"Ahoy, there!" called Drew, hailing the fort.

"Ahoy, yourself!" came back the answer. "Is that you, Allen?"

"Yes. And some friends with me."

"Friends?" There was surprise in the tone. "Who are they?"

"I'll let you see for yourself."

The besieged, whose sleep had been fitful, had all been aroused by the colloquy, and they crowded to the front of the barricade. The moon had now risen, and their faces could be clearly discerned. Ruth lovelier every time he saw her, Allen thought, stood beside her father.

"Why, it's Whitlock!" cried Captain Hamilton jubilantly. "And Gunther—and Trent—and Ashley—and *Barnes!*" he went on in ever-increasing wonderment and excitement, as he recognized the

weather-beaten faces. "And blest if here isn't that old heathen, Wah Lee! And the Jap! Glory hallelujah!"

There was a moment of wild exclamations and handshakings.

"Bully lads!" cried the master of the *Bertha Hamilton,* with deep emotion. "So you broke away and came to help your captain, did you? Good lads."

"We didn't exactly break away, Cap'n," said Gunther. "Though God knows we wanted to bad enough. But it's Mr. Drew you want to thank for our bein' here. He done it all."

"I knowed it! I knowed it!" cried Tyke. "I felt it in my bones when I first saw 'em! Glory be!"

"He did it all?" inquired the captain. "What do you mean? Tell us, Allen."

"Oh, there isn't much to tell," replied Drew. "I was lucky enough to reach the schooner and I found the men there with their hands tied. I cut the ropes and brought them along."

"You reached the schooner!" the captain repeated. "How?"

"Did you git the boat from under the eyes of them fellers?" asked Tyke.

"No. I swam over."

"Swam!" ejaculated the captain.

Ruth gave a little shriek and put her hand to her heart.

"Oh!" she cried. "The sharks!"

"Haven't I always told you that boy was a wonder?" chuckled Tyke.

But here Whitlock touched his cap.

"Beggin' your pardon, Cap'n," he said apologetically, "but if Mr. Drew was as slow with his fists as he is with tellin' his story, meanin' no disrespec', me an' my mates wouldn't be here."

"Go ahead, Whitlock," said the captain. "It is like pulling teeth to get anything from Mr. Drew."

Whitlock told the story, which lost nothing in the telling.

There was a pause, tense with emotion, and all eyes were turned on Drew. Tyke's hand clapped him on the shoulder, but the old man did not trust himself to speak. Ruth's eyes were wet, but the tears could not obscure a look that made the young man's heart thump wildly.

"Allen," said the captain, taking his hand, "it was the pluckiest thing I ever heard of. If we get out of this place alive, we shall owe it all to you."

"You make too much of it," disclaimed Drew, red and confused. "But hadn't we better stow away these things the men have brought along? Here's the box of cartridges I found under your berth."

The captain fairly shouted.

"That puts the cap sheaf on!" he exulted. "Now Ditty and his gang are done for. They can't come too soon."

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE GHOST

The camp quieted down after a time. In one corner, Ruth had a shelter of rugs which had been brought up from the boat, and she retired to this after helping her father dress and rebandage Drew's foot.

The captain, as so many skippers are, was a good amateur surgeon; and as far as he could discern there were no bones broken. But the foot was so very painful that the young man could not coax the drowsy god. He tossed restlessly on the hard bed of lava rock, and, though his eyes closed at times, they opened again as though fitted with springs.

The exciting events of the day and the chances he had taken were repeated over and over in his mind. For the first time in his life he had aimed a deadly weapon at another human being.

He knew that Bingo had fallen by his hand. But, oddly enough, that fact did not sear his conscience. He had been accused of drowning Lester Parmalee, and the thought of that accusation now made him shrink and writhe.

He was guiltless of Parmalee's awful end; still, he shuddered at the thought that he might have been guilty. At one time he had felt such rage and ani-

mosity, through jealousy, that he might have struck Parmalee a fatal blow.

Drew had considered the missing man his rival for Ruth's affection. Fate had removed that rival from his path. Yet, in doing this, fate had likewise raised a barrier to Drew's own happiness with Ruth.

The man groaned aloud at this thought. Then, fearing that some of the others would be disturbed, that Ruth might hear him, he arose and hobbled to the barrier.

He felt in a pocket of the coat he had put on while aboard the schooner and found pipe and tobacco. He filled the pipe and fell to smoking, hoping to soothe his jumping nerves, while he stared out across the moonlit open.

The tropical moonlight revealed every object to the edge of the jungle as clearly as though it were broad day. It was a peaceful scene—so peaceful that it was hard to imagine that daybreak might change it to a place of carnage.

Suddenly he took his pipe from his lips and peered more closely at a spot near the edge of the jungle. Something had moved there.

It could not be one of the sentinels. Attack was not expected from the west. Nor was it one of the small, night-roaming animals of the forest. Drew was sure there were no beasts of prey on this island. It was too far from the mainland and the larger islands.

The something which he had seen moved farther out from the line of verdure. It was a man.

Although the distance was fully a cable's length, Drew's eyes were keen. The moonlight for a full minute shone on the face of the figure before it moved again.

The sight of the pallid countenance, with the black hair above it, smote Drew with an emotion akin to terror. He could not understand the apparition—he could scarcely believe his eyes; yet that face was Lester Parmalee's!

In a moment more the man had disappeared. The figure seemed to have melted into the black background of the jungle.

Without a grain of superstition in his being, Allen Drew felt that he was in the presence of the supernatural. He had not imagined the figure. It was no figment of a waking dream.

This was what Ruth had seen. This was what had so startled her on the occasion of the treasure seekers' first visit to the whale's hump. She thought she had imagined the appearance of Lester Parmalee. Drew knew he had seen it!

He was tempted to arouse Captain Hamilton. Yet he shrank from that. He could not utter the missing man's name to Ruth's father, knowing, as he did, that the capain was doubtful of his, Drew's, innocence in connection with Parmalee's disappearance.

He whispered to the man on guard that he was going outside, and quickly surmounted the barrier. He had his automatic revolver; and, anyway, he did not think any of the mutineers were in the neighborhood.

Having marked well the spot where the ghostly figure had presented itself to his startled vision, Drew hobbled directly to it, forgetting in his excitement the painful foot. He did not halt to search for foot-prints, but looked instead for an opening in the jungle, into which the figure could have disappeared.

It was there—one of those strange lava paths through the thick vegetation. The moonlight scarcely illuminated it, for it was narrow; but Drew entered boldly. This matter must be brought to a conclusion. He felt that the mystery had to be solved without delay.

There was light enough to show him the black wall of the jungle on either side of the path. There were no openings. Tropical undergrowth is not like that of a northern forest. Here the lianas and thorns intermingled with strong brush, make an impervious hedge. One could not penetrate it without the aid of a machete.

Drew heard no sound as he went on. The man he followed was not struggling through the jungle in an attempt to escape pursuit. Allen hastened his footsteps, his hand on his revolver. Was that a

figure moving through the semi-dusk ahead? Should he call? His lips formed the name of Parmalee, but no sound came from them.

Suddenly he came to a clearing, perhaps a dozen yards across. Here the lava had formed a pool and cooled in this circular patch. The moonlight now revealed all.

A figure—the same he had seen upon the edge of the jungle—was crossing this opening in the forest. The pursuer sprang forward.

"Wait!" he gasped. "It's I—Drew! Wait!"

The other whirled. He held only a club as a means of defense. He was in rags. His black hair hung in dank locks about his pale brow.

"Who are you?" he cried. "Keep off!"

"Parmalee!"

Allen Drew rushed in, making light of the club, and seized the other in his arms.

"My God, man! don't you know me? How came you here? Are you real?" he chattered.

"Is it you, Drew?" queried the other, brokenly. "Lord! don't take my breath, old fellow."

"They accuse me of taking your life!" ejaculated Drew, with hysterical laughter. "Don't mind a little thing like being hugged. Gad, Parmalee! how glad I am to see you!"

"Accused *you* of taking my life!" the other exclaimed, amazed.

"Ditty, the black-hearted hound, accused me of

throwing you overboard. Said he saw me do it. Captain Hamilton half believes it yet. Heavens, Parmalee, but you're a sight to put heart into a man!

"Only," Drew added, "you quite took the heart out of me just now when I saw you standing there at the edge of the forest staring at the fort."

"The fort. Yes. That's what puzzled me," Parmalee said. "I wasn't sure which party was defending it. The sailors mutinied, didn't they? You're fighting them?"

"I should say we are, the——"

He got no further. In their eagerness, the two men had been talking in ordinary tones and had paid no attention to their surroundings. A voice suddenly crackled through the other sounds of the night.

"Well, we've got two of 'em. Hands up, or we'll blow your heads off!"

It was Ditty with half a dozen of the mutineers at his back. They held Drew and Parmalee under the muzzles of their automatics.

It was useless to attempt to escape. Even Drew, reckless as he had shown himself at times, would not take his life so lightly in his hands. And, besides, he knew well that Ditty would be only too glad to shoot him.

His hands, as well as Parmalee's, went up promptly. One of the seamen, laughing a little,

came forward and searched them both, taking away Drew's weapon. Parmalee had dropped his useless club.

The young men, so suddenly made captives by the mutineers, stood with their backs to the strong moonlight, their faces in the shadow. The moon was now sinking behind a buttress of the volcano. As yet, neither had been recognized by their captors.

But now Ditty came forward, and first of all thrust his face into that of Parmalee.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded.

The young man lifted his head and stared into the mate's pale eye. Ditty started back with a shriek.

"What—what—— Who is it?" chattered the mate. His henchmen gazed at him in amazement. Suddenly Ditty came forward again, and whirled Parmalee around so that he faced the sinking moon.

"Mr. Parmalee!" he whispered.

The latter smiled faintly.

"It's Parmalee, all right," he said. "You didn't expect to see me again, I imagine, Mr. Ditty."

The sound of the man's voice seemed to reassure the mate. The other mutineers chattered their surprise. Finally Ditty, licking his dry lips, stammered:

"I—I thought that you—you were——"

"No thanks to you that I'm not drowned, Mr. Ditty, if that's what you mean," said Parmalee bitterly. "You tried your best to murder me."

"Not me!" declared Ditty, with a gesture of

denial, turning his single eye away from the other's accusing gaze. "It was that swab, Drew, threw you overboard."

"Liar," declared Parmalee evenly. "Drew lay on the deck unconscious from his fall. I was stooping to help him. Though you crept up behind me, I knew you when you seized me in your arms, you villain. And I hope to see you punished for it."

Ditty, with a curse, would have struck Parmalee, but Drew stepped between them and received the blow intended for his comrade.

"If you must hit a man, hit one of your own size," he said quietly.

"Drew! Drew himself!" shouted the mate, recognizing the second captive. "The very one we wanted! Hi, bullies! we've got the whip-hand now. We've got the old man's right bower! An' him an' the gal an' Tyke Grimshaw will pay us our price for the freedom of this laddy-buck, to say nothin' of Parmalee. Bring 'em along!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE BATTLE IS ON

Helpless and almost hopeless, the two captives were led deeper into the forest paths. Drew realized that they were skirting the barren hillside and gaining a position nearer to the treasure seekers' fort.

Finally they saw a fire in the now dark wood, and soon came to a stockade. Several fallen trees formed this barrier, and in addition to the protection they afforded, a number of branches had been so arranged as to form an abattis. The work had been hastily done; but with determined men behind it, it would offer a formidable obstacle to an attacking party.

At a fire in the further end of the enclosure the mutineers were preparing their breakfast. Ditty went over and talked earnestly with some of his men, but finally broke off abruptly and came back to the prisoners, who had both been tied, wrist and ankle.

"So I've got you where I've wanted you at last, have I?" he taunted Drew. "Little moonlight walks don't always pan out as you expect."

Drew disdained to reply.

"You won't talk, eh?" the mate snarled, kicking him in the ribs with his heavy boot. "Well, I know some cunnin' little ways of makin' people talk when I want 'em to. But I'm goin' to wait a while before I try 'em on you. I want somebody here to see you cringe and hear you howl. Bless her pretty eyes, how she'll enjoy it!"

Then Drew's eyes flashed and he strained at his bonds.

"You vile scoundrel!" he cried. "If my hands were free I'd choke the life out of you!"

"So you can talk, after all?" sneered the mate, his cold eye becoming still more reptilian.

"And more than talk—give me the chance," Drew flung back at him.

"Smart boy," jeered the mate. "Smart enough to translate Spanish and the pirate's old map, eh? An' now you're goin' to smart more when you see me an' my mates walk off with the doubloons," and he laughed.

"Yes. When I do!" the young man said boldly. "You'll be a deal older when that happens, Ditty."

"I'll show you!"ejaculated the mate, and kicked him again.

"The brute!" gasped Parmalee.

"Parmalee," Drew said in a trembling voice, "I never wanted the use of my hands so much as I do now. When I do get free, I shall be tempted to kill that fellow."

"He deserves it—the double-dyed villain!" groaned Parmalee. "And he threw me overboard."

"I knew he must have done so," said Drew. "But why did he do it? Not just to put the crime on me? How were you saved and how did you get here? Let's hear it all."

"I had overheard the rascal plotting with some of the men," returned Parmalee. "Ditty must have caught a glimpse of me. I suppose he felt the time was not ripe for exposure; so he put me out of the way. He must have been lurking near us that night when you fell. I was stooping to help you when he grabbed me and flung me over the rail. I didn't have time to cry out.

"I'm a good swimmer—one of the few active accomplishments I possess—and I swam as long as I could. Just as I lost strength, my hand touched a cask lashed to a grating that must have fallen from some vessel, or been thrown from it. That held me up till morning. By that time I was about all in. But just then a sloop—a turtle catcher she was—bore down on me, sighted me, and answered my frantic appeal, and picked me up. It was a terrible experience."

"It must have been," breathed the other. "Go on. How did you get here to this very island where the doubloons were buried?"

"Are they here?" asked Parmalee eagerly. "Do you know?"

"Sh!" whispered Drew. "Don't say a word. We have 'em—pecks of them! And jewels and other stuff besides—enough to make us all as rich as Midas."

"Humph!" commented Parmalee, with sudden gravity. "And he had asses' ears. I'm afraid this mess we're all in shows that we did an asinine thing in coming down here after the doubloons. What is wealth compared to life itself?"

"True," murmured Drew. "And what we've been through besides. But go on. Tell the rest."

"When those turtle catchers landed here I had no idea that this island was the one marked on the pirate's map which Captain Hamilton showed me," pursued Parmalee. "I was treated well enough. But I happened to have no money in my pockets, and the men disbelieved my claim that I would pay them if they would get me to a civilized port. So they made me work. That was all right, but the work was too heavy for me; so I went off into the interior of the island to see if there were not some inhabitants. Then the first earthquake came. It frightened those half-breeds and negroes blue. They set off in the sloop, leaving me behind.

"Day before yesterday I came up this way. I guessed that the fortification must have been thrown up by one party from the *Bertha Hamilton* and that this was the island we had been seeking; but hesitated to come nearer, unarmed as I was, fearing that

Ditty and his gang of cut-throats were fortified here."

"Ruth saw you," Drew volunteered. "She thought you were an apparition. And so did I, this morning. But you must have had a frightful time of it."

"I've been keeping myself alive on fruit and shell-fish since the turtle catchers deserted me. It's not a satisfying diet," Parmalee said with a little laugh.

During this low-voiced conversation between the two prisoners, the mutineers had been eating breakfast. They offered the young men none; but neither Drew nor Parmalee was thinking of his appetite.

"Sit up close behind me, Parmalee," whispered Drew. "I believe I can work on that cord that fastens your wrists. If I can get you free, you can free me."

"Good! We'll try it," said the other confidently.

"That will do. Get close to me and let me pick away at this knot. Ditty's too busy to come over here now. Besides, they're getting ready to attack our people, I think. He believes we're safe here, and he'll need all his men with him."

"You're getting it, Drew, old fellow," whispered Parmalee eagerly.

"Bet your life! One of the easiest knots a seaman ever tied. Now try mine."

Parmalee did as directed, and the knot that fas-

tened Drew's wrists soon yielded. But the latter still kept his hands behind him and assumed a pose of deep dejection, his companion doing the same.

As Drew had conjectured, Ditty had made up his mind to attack. He was still unaware of what had taken place on the schooner during the night, and was confident that he outnumbered the besieged by about two to one. Time was pressing, for a ship might appear at any time. He resolved to hazard all his chances on one throw.

At the head of his band he left the stockade. Drew and Parmalee waited till they felt sure that all had gone and that no guard left behind was stealthily watching them through the trees. Drew then got out his pocket knife and severed their ankle lashings.

At that moment a volley of shots was heard in the direction of the barricade. It was followed by another and still another. The fight had begun.

"Come on!" cried Drew excitedly, and he dashed out of the stockade followed by Parmalee.

Day was just breaking. Overhead the twittering of doves, the squeaking of parrakeets, the countless sounds of bird and insect life, welcomed the sun.

But the fusilades of gun shots hushed the clamor of wild life, and sent the birds and the animals shrieking away from the vicinity.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE SURRENDER—CONCLUSION

Great was the consternation in the little fortress when it was discovered that Drew was absent. And as the time dragged by and he did not return, his friends knew that either he had been killed or was a prisoner in the hands of the mutineers. And if the latter, they knew only too well what mercy he had to expect from the mate. One murder more or less was nothing to that scoundrel now.

Grimshaw and Captain Hamilton were abnormally grave, and Ruth's eyes were wild with anguish and terror. She no longer had any doubt of her feeling for Allen. She knew that she loved him with all her heart.

At the first sign of daylight, the master of the *Bertha Hamilton* put his little band on a war footing. The ammunition was distributed, and he rejoiced to see how abundant it was. That he had Drew to thank for. Ruth prepared lint and bandages for the wounded from supplies which Allen had also brought, then she stood ready to reload the extra rifles and small arms, or, at need, to use a revolver herself. Her eyes were clear and dauntless, and if her father looked at her with grave anxiety, it was also with pride.

Breakfast despatched, the men took the places

assigned to them. The captain had formed his plan of battle.

"They'll rush us after a few volleys," he asserted. "Wait till they get within thirty feet before you fire. Then let them have it, and aim low. If they waver, and I think they will, jump over the breastworks when I give the word, and we'll charge in turn. If we once get them on the run, they'll never rally and we'll hunt them down like rats until they surrender. We're going to win, my lads!"

The answer was a cheer, and Captain Hamilton had no doubt as to the spirit with which his little force was going into the fray.

The outposts came hurrying in with the news that the mutineers were coming. And not long after, this was confirmed by a spatter of bullets against the rocks.

The defenders made a spirited reply, and several volleys were exchanged. But the mutineers were in the shelter of the wood.

Ditty knew that the pistol bullets of his men would do little damage at long range.

There came an ominous pause.

"They're getting ready now," said Captain Hamilton quietly. "Mind what I told you, my lads, about shooting low. And when you see me jump over the rocks, come close on my heels. I'll be up in front."

It was a nerve-trying wait. Then, suddenly, the

mutineers emerged from the wood and rushed toward the fort, yelling as they came.

They had covered nearly half the distance when Captain Hamilton gave the word and the rifles spoke. Some of the bullets went high and wide, but several of the attacking force staggered and went down. Their comrades hesitated for a second, and the master of the *Bertha Hamilton* seized his opportunity.

"Follow me!" he yelled. "Come on!"

He leaped over the rocky breastwork, and with a cheer the seamen followed him.

The check of the mutineers had been only temporary. Ditty raged and stormed and swore at them and they regained some semblance of order. By the time the captain and his force had fairly cleared the lava barricade and had got into the full momentum of their charge, the mutineers had reformed. In another instant the lines had met and were locked in deadly combat.

There was no longer any pretense of discipline. When their guns were empty, every man singled out his antagonist and grappled with him. The forces were now about evenly divided, and for a time the issue was doubtful.

Then came a diversion.

Out from the wood leaped Drew, whirling a heavy club, his eyes blazing with rage and the lust of battle. Here was the chandlery clerk, metamor-

phosed indeed! He was followed by Parmalee, plucky, but for the moment breathless from the struggle through the jungle.

"Shoot him, you bullies! Pull him down!" yelled Ditty, seeing the charging Drew.

He aimed his own revolver at the young man and fired. Drew felt as though his head had been seared by a red-hot iron. He staggered, but, nevertheless, kept on, charging directly at the one-eyed mate.

They met. As Drew struck at his enemy with the club, the latter flung his emptied revolver full in the face of the younger man. Drew ducked, but could not avoid it. But the bodies of the two came together, and they clenched.

Back and forth they strained, each struggling for a wrestler's hold in order to enable him to throw the other. For half a minute or more neither was successful.

But the mate was the better man in the rough-and-tumble fight. He suddenly lifted Drew from the ground and flung him to the ground. But Ditty fell too, landing heavily on his victim.

The shock almost deprived Drew of breath. The wound in his head had confused him. His grasp on Ditty relaxed, and with a yell of triumph the latter released himself, leaped to his feet, seizing the club as he arose.

"Now I've got you!" he yelled, and swung the club aloft.

At that moment Captain Hamilton shot Ditty through the breast. With a snarl, the mate, losing the club, hurled himself toward the captain and grappled with him. They went down, the latter's head striking the ground so that he was dazed for a moment.

The mutineer jerked the knife from his belt and raised it to strike; but Tyke Grimshaw, who had been fighting furiously, kicked the knife from his hand and the captain, recovering, threw his enemy from him and arose.

Ditty did not rise. The remaining mutineers wavered when their leader fell, then turned to flee.

"After them, my lads!" cried Captain Hamilton. "We've got 'em on the run!"

But the battle ended abruptly.

In the excitement of the fight, none had noticed the black cloud shooting up from the crater so close at hand. There was a stupendous roar, and the earth shook again as though twisted between the fingers of a Titan. The crashing of trees in the forest, and the bursting of hot lava spewed out of the volcano, grew into a cannonade.

Prone on the ground, terrified and bewildered before this awful seismic phenomenon, neither belligerent party thought of fighting. Not until the uproar and quaking had subsided some minutes later, could they reconcile themselves to the conviction that by a miracle only were they alive.

The mutineers crept away into the forest unmolested. Gradually the others regained self-control. Tyke nursed the lame foot which had done such timely service in thwarting Ditty, while the captain tallied up his losses. Two of the faithful seamen were dead, Ashley and Trent, and several were rather badly wounded, while none had emerged from the struggle without some injury. Five of the mutineers had been killed, and three more were severely though not mortally wounded.

Drew had at first thought that the wound inflicted by Ditty's bullet was slight. But suddenly a deadly weakness came over him. He seemed to be falling into a stupor from which he tried desperately to save himself. Ruth was bandaging his wound when she noticed his growing faintness. She cried out in alarm.

"Allen, dear, Allen!" she begged. "Rouse up! Don't faint!"

"I—I'm going, Ruth," he answered.

"No, no;" she cried desperately. "I won't let you!"

"I'm going," he muttered, clinging to her.

"You mustn't!" she exclaimed wildly. "Don't go, Allen! Not until I tell you——"

But the next moment Drew slipped into unconsciousness.

When he awoke to find himself between snowy sheets in his old berth with Ruth's cool hand upon

his forehead and her tender eyes looking into his, he had many things to learn. She pieced out for him the happenings after that stark fight on the island. She told how Parmalee had picked up a revolver from the field and played his part in the fight; how, after the burial of the dead and aid to the wounded, the treasure chest had been transferred to the schooner; how the remnant of the mutineers had evaded capture and had fled to the remote parts of the island; and, greatest of all, how that last earthquake shock had tipped the reef again and made a new opening in the barrier that had hemmed in the schooner. She told him, too, that in an hour the *Bertha Hamilton* would be ploughing the waves of the Caribbean.

To all these things he listened with unutterable content and peace beyond all telling. He was alive! His name was stainless! His future was secure! And Ruth was beside him! It was heaven just to lie there, drinking in the beauty of her eyes and breathing the fragrance of her hair when she bent over to adjust his pillow.

"And we shall soon have bidden good-bye to Earthquake Island!" Ruth exclaimed gaily.

"Is that what you've dubbed it?" he asked, smiling. "It couldn't be better christened. Earthquakes seem to be its chief stock in trade."

"Except doubloons," she reminded him. "Don't be ungrateful."

Tyke came in and sat patting Drew's hand, too deeply moved at first to trust himself to speak. The captain, too, was a visitor, confidently attributing the salvation of the party to Drew's pluck and daring. And Parmalee—a vastly stronger and healthier Parmalee than before he had been compelled to 'rough it'—showed himself exceedingly friendly.

"It has been a great voyage for me," he said. "I'm open to congratulations, Drew. My health is so much improved, that I shall be married as soon as we reach New York."

Drew's heart suddenly turned to ice. He knew he ought to say something, but for the life of him he could not speak. He looked unseeingly at Parmalee, his face the color of ashes.

"Her name is Edith," continued Parmalee, with the egotism of a lover. "Beautiful name, don't you think? We've been engaged for more than a year, but I didn't want to marry until I was stronger."

The blood flowed into Drew's face once more.

"Beautiful?" he cried. "I should say it was! And I bet she's as beautiful as her name. Parmalee, I congratulate you. With all my heart I congratulate you. You're a lucky dog. Shake hands."

Parmalee's eyes twinkled.

"Upon my word! you're a fellow of sudden and wonderful enthusiasms," he exclaimed. "But I can

guess why. I'm not blind. Go in and win, old fellow."

Ruth came back just then, gay and radiant.

"Seems to me there's a lot of noise here for a sick man's room," she remarked, looking smilingly from one to the other. I'll have to drive you out, Mr. Parmalee, if you get my patient too greatly excited," she went on, shaking her finger at him with mock severity.

"I imagine I haven't done him any harm," laughed Parmalee slyly.

"Harm!" cried Drew. "You've given me a new lease on life. I'll get well now in no time. I've just got to get well!"

"I was telling him about Edith," explained Parmalee.

"Edith!" exclaimed Ruth. "Isn't she just the dearest girl? So you've taken Allen into the secret too? Go and get her picture and let him see what a darling she is."

Parmalee, nothing loth, rose and left the room.

"You'll simply fall in love with her when you see her picture," prophesied Ruth, as she adjusted the pillow.

"No, I won't," declared Drew with emphasis.

"She's one of the dearest friends I have," Ruth continued, teasingly keeping her hand just out of Allen's reach. "Of course, I knew all about their engagement, and Mr. Parmalee's talked to me a lot about her during this voyage. The poor fellow was

so lonely without her that I suppose he had to have some one to confide in."

A great light broke upon Drew's mind.

"So that's what you two used to talk about when I was so——" he hesitated, seeking for a word.

"So what?" she asked demurely, with a glint of the old mischief in her eyes.

"Oh, you know," he answered, hardly knowing how to proceed. He was doing his best to catch her eye but could not.

He raised up and caught her by the forearm, but he was too weak to hold her and she drew herself gently away.

"I told Mr. Parmalee that he must not excite you, and now I'm acting just as badly," she said. "You must rest or you'll never get well."

"Oh, I'm bound to get well *now!*" he declared.

At that moment Tyke Grimshaw's face appeared at the doorway.

"How are you making it, Allen?" he questioned.

"First rate," was the answer. The young man was rather put out over the interruption, yet he could not help but remember what Grimshaw had done for him and he gave the old man a warm look of gratitude.

"We're going to have some rough sailing for a little while," announced Grimshaw. "We're going to sail through that there gap in the reef—if it can be done."

From a distance they could hear the voice of

Mr. Rogers giving orders. And the stamp of the seamen's feet announced that the *Bertha Hamilton* was getting under way. Short-handed as she was, never did sailors swing into the ancient chantey in better tune and with more cheerfulness.

"Oh, haul the bowline, Katy is my darling,
Oh, haul the bowline, the bowline *haul!*

"Oh, haul the bowline, London girls are towing,
Oh, haul the bowline, the bowline *haul!*

"Oh, haul the bowline, the packet is a-rolling,
Oh, haul the bowline, the bowline *haul!*"

With anchor apeak, topsails jerked aloft and flattened, the schooner took the wind. Although the earthquake had subsided, the waters both inside the reef and outside were much troubled. Where the two jaws of the rocky barrier still remained, the waves pounded and foamed furiously.

Would they be able to get out safely? That was the question in the mind of every man who trod the deck of the schooner. Soundings had been made, and they had learned that the lane to safety was both narrow and winding.

"If we hit, it will be all up with us," said one of the tars to his mates.

"We got ter take a chance," was the answer.

"Keelhaul me, if I want to stay at this island any longer!"

Closer and closer to the jaws of the reef sped the *Bertha Hamilton.* Then up and down like a cork danced the schooner. For one brief instant as she plunged through the waves and the foam, scattering the flying spray in all directions, it looked as if nature might force her upon the rocks, there to be battered into a shapeless hulk. But then, as if by a miracle, she righted herself, answered her helm, and shot through the miraculously opened lane into the blue waters of the ocean beyond.

They were homeward bound.

A week later as the schooner was running up the Florida coast, Drew, who had gained strength magically after his enlightening interview with Parmalee, was standing with Ruth near the rail. Dusk was coming on, and a crescent moon was already showing its horns in the sky, still touched by the sun's aftermath.

In the hush of the twilight they had fallen silent. Ruth's hand was resting on the rail. Allen reached over gently and took it in his own. It was quivering, but she did not withdraw it.

"Ruth, look at me," he said, somewhat huskily.

She lifted her eyes to his, but dropped them instantly.

"Ruth," he continued, "when I was hurt and was losing consciousness on the island, do you re-

member what you said to me?" She was silent. "Tell me, Ruth," he urged. "Do you?"

"How can I?" she said evasively. "I—I said so many things. I was so excited——"

"I remember," he said softly. "I will never forget. You said: 'Don't go, Allen, not until I tell you——' What was it you wished to tell me, Ruth?"

"Don't make me say it, Allen," she murmured, her gaze downcast.

"Was it this?" he asked; and now his voice was shaking. "Was it: Don't go, Allen, not until I tell you that I love you? Was that it, Ruth?"

She looked at him then, and her eyes were wonderful.

With a stifled cry he opened his arms, and she crept into them in shy and sweet surrender.

His lips met hers.

He had gained the Doubloons—and the Girl.

THE END